The Englishman of the Rue Caïn

By H. F. Wood

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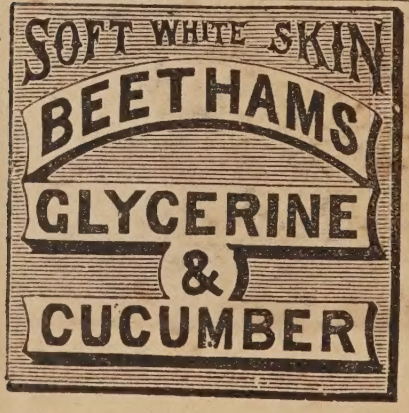

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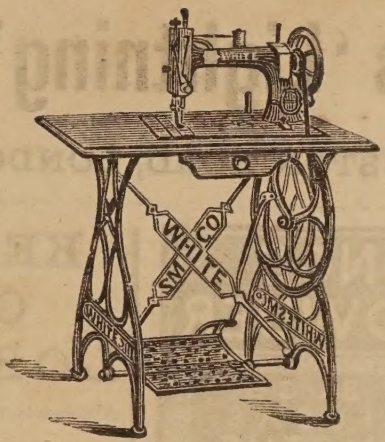

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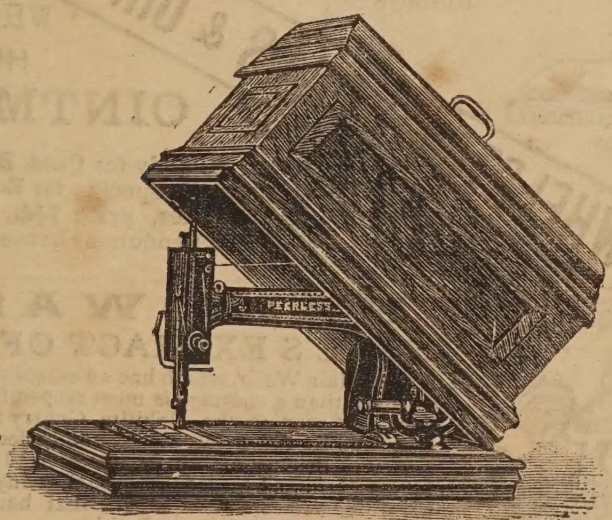

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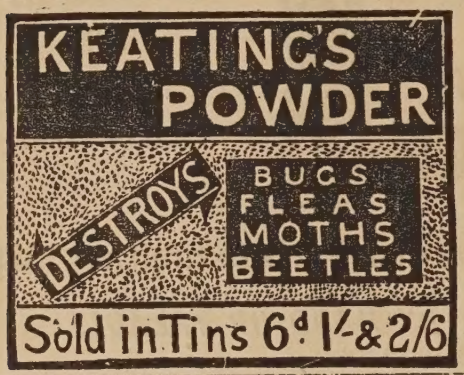

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THE ENGLISHMAN OF THE RUE CAÏN

BY

H. F. WOOD

AUTHOR OF 'THE PASSENGER FROM SCOTLAND YARD,' 'THE PROLOGUE TO A DRAMA,' ETC.

London

CHATTO & WINDUS, PICCADILLY

1890

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THE ENGLISHMAN OF THE RUE CAÏN.

CHAPTER I.

It seemed as though all traces had been lost.

Entrusted with a mission which he had had some strong personal reasons for accepting, Mr. Herbert—of Gray, Longley, and Gray, solicitors, Budge Row, Cannon Street, E.C.—found himself compelled, on or about the ninth day after his arrival in Paris, to point out by letter to the firm that the investigation of the Garth case would require the special resources of experts.

Allan Ridgeway Garth was absolutely undiscoverable. Up to a date easy to establish, wrote Mr. Herbert to his firm, the existence led by Allan Garth in Paris had continued to be the dissolute existence of which they knew. On that date he discharged the persons in his service; relinquished, as if in consequence of a sudden determination, the suite of apartments he had tenanted in the Rue de Monceau; offered no explanation with regard to his movements in the future; and then tranquilly went away. From that date, he was lost.

'Allan Ridgeway Garth, formerly of Lancaster Gate, and late of the Rue de Monceau, Paris, is requested to communicate with Messrs. Gray, Longley, and Gray, solicitors, Budge Row, Cannon Street, London, E.C.' Such was the formula which had been drawn up for insertion in the morning newspapers, front page, second column. The contingent reversioner had objected to that measure of publicity, as undesirable, or, at any rate, as premature. Mr. Herbert

himself had supported the objection. The contingent reversioner had proposed this preliminary inquiry; and, to keep certain private matters away from the public cognisance—above all, looking to the social position of the person next interested under the will—that is, the contingent reversioner—or, rather, of his wife—Gray, Longley, and Gray had thought it best to charge some gentleman from their own office with the simple errand, as they conceived it, of ascertaining the whereabouts of Allan Garth in Paris. Mr. Herbert was well acquainted with the affairs of the late Elliot Burroughes, one of the most litigious clients of the firm, and one of the richest. He had also been in social relations with the parties interested under the will. To Mr. Herbert, therefore, had been readily confided the mission of communicating with the universal legatee.

For, the universal legatee of Elliot Lucas Burroughes, whose will had been proved under £650,000, was Allan Garth, supposed to be in Paris, but up to the present undiscoverable. The contingent reversioner, the person next interested, was the man who had supplanted him, Ormond-Weir—the man who had twice supplanted him; who had his exits and his entrances wherever Danaë might be posturing in some temple of Thespis; who knew every capital of Europe quite as intimately as he knew the one-mile radius from St. James's Square—none other than the husband of the fashionable beauty; the reversion would accrue to Hugh Ormond-Weir, whom everyone had heard of, who did not live in San Francisco, and against whom no one had yet whispered anything that was untrue.

Upon the issue of the mission to discover Allan Garth, a sensation drama in real life perhaps depended.

It was as a pastime to the serious business of traversing life temperately upon a large independent income that Mr. George Herbert had adopted the profession of the law. He was now very near the completion of his articles with the honoured and long-established house of Gray, Longley, and Gray, whose youngest partner, C. L. (Coke Littleton), lived at Staines, came every day to the office, and was thrice a grand-parent. Mr. Herbert had for some time after the commencement of his articles viewed the successes of his calling with absolute and undisguised indifference. The zeal of the paid servants had by degrees won him from that

attitude of gentlemanly unconcern. He had one day been provoked by opposition into the stubborn espousal of a client's interest: whence, to the zealous legal tutelage of other clients the transition was not difficult. Mr. Longley joked him sometimes, in the summer, on his forensic lore; the winter Mr. Longley, who was asthmatic, passed at Torquay. But Mr. Herbert was a sound conveyancer; and there were no better managing-clerks east of St. Paul's Churchyard than those of the large firm of Gray, Longley, and Gray.

The romantic history of Allan Garth had for an instant, at one point, remembered Mr. Herbert, touched, and rather perilously influenced, the current of his own plain life. Garth was his senior by some years. But of the two, the elder—not the younger—had been stricken down:

> 'Who knows not Circe,
> Daughter of the Sun, whose charmèd cup
> Whoever tasted lost his upright shape,
> And downward fell . . . .?'

It had been the younger man who, formally smiling upon radiant Circe, had declined the proffered philter and passed on. For Allan Garth the goblet had been filled up to the brim with gall. His brief romance, with its long, long prelude, had so brightly opened that the lover's eyes were dazed, and he closed them, and then came the awakening. He had played earnestly a poor part in a painful comedy of love—a farce, even—the farce in which the lady laughs more loudly than the spectators—the broad farce at which there are spectators who can wince and flush, remember, bitterly regret, sigh—perhaps wish, perhaps weep.

'Garth was an idolizer,' soliloquized Mr. George Herbert; 'he was a dreaming idolizer, and idolizers are foredoomed. Women who can compel other, if reluctant, admirations, *will* have it so! Hang it! why does the man who seeks to win the woman he loves persistently prostrate himself before her? How is it that the fellows who prostrate themselves the most obstinately, and the most fiercely grovel in the dust, are usually—we all know the case!—extra lucid when they deal with everything except their own most cherished hopes, and then—purblind! Don't they under-

stand, hang it! these fellows who are positively capable of supreme devotions—don't they understand what we other fellows—practical fellows, prosaic, jog-trot, wideawake, and rather selfish fellows; what we know, for the most part, very well, that, more often than she will tell us—more often than she will acknowledge to herself—a woman takes us at our word? Which may imply instinctive truthfulness on her own part, or merely inexperience, or weakness of character, or flabbiness of intellect: well, let us be chivalrous, and say that it always implies truthfulness, although it's no use denying that you can have all these varieties; and if we are to be chivalrous, what is chivalry but concession?

'Well, now, here was Garth, one of the men who cast themselves passionately at the feet of the women they love, glorifying, in the delirium of their adoration, the common dust in which their idols move. And what happened to him? Why, what nearly always happens. The idol watched him calmly as he grovelled in the dust, watched him abase himself, took him at his own estimate, and let him lie there. Hang it all! it's only natural, isn't it? And a good thing for the community, too, now and then. We get an artist in that sort of fashion, now and then; an artist who might not otherwise have been revealed; the artist of one key usually, whether you read him in a poem, look at him in a picture, or listen to him in A minor; and sometimes he bores us.

'Deuced hard, in every way, upon the artist who has to be evolved by Woe. Perhaps we cut him persistently until he dies. But give him all we can—gold, silver, and brass; blue, purple, and scarlet; fine linen and goats' hair, and rams' skins dyed red; oil for the light, spices for anointing oil, and for the sweet incense; and onyx, and stones to be set for the ephod and for the breastplate: give him all this, and his tent and covering, his pillars, the hangings of the court, and the hanging for the door of the court: let the wise-hearted among us bring him free offerings every morning—we can never bestow upon him the one reward he would have prized. Above all the homage of the wise and willing-hearted he has placed the favour of a single woman. We may never promise him her tenderness or her gratitude. In that matter we are powerless, or worse; for if we add our

voices to his own we may be investing with dignity and importance a single feminine caprice—the caprice, possibly, of some woman who is notoriously handsome—of a handsome woman who, though not notorious, but on the contrary esteemed, may be, for all we know, both vain and dull.'

So meditated Mr. Herbert, as he loitered in the Monceau Park. Within a stone's-throw stood the former residence of Allan Garth, now even a richer man, if he could but be told of it. Garth must have sauntered often through these gardens, thought Mr. Herbert, noting the fresh myosotis beds, the lilac, and the spring verdure. There was no reflection in the small lake of the crumbling columns at its brink. A tarnished film extended over the surface of the water and concealed its depth. A group of overhanging trees, at one spot, threw a strange gloom across the pool, stagnant under its motionless and sullied veil. A crime could be committed here, but scarcely without prompt detection. A suicide?

Was Allan Garth a man in the least likely to commit suicide? wondered Mr. Herbert, returning to an hypothesis he had already examined and dismissed. No; he could not think it. Their acquaintance had been slight, but he had comprehended Allan Garth, he fancied. Recalling the circumstances of their last meeting, he pictured again the gaunt figure and the melancholy face; the faint swarthy tinge of the complexion; the brown eyes, full and vivid; the uncouth tufts of jet-black hair. How long was it since they had first met? Four years? About four years. And on the very occasion of their first encounter Mr. Herbert had remarked the settled, self-contained despair which other people mocked at when the ungraceful figure of poor Garth could be distinguished in a drawing-room. He was a gentleman, as the phrase goes, by birth and education; but he had always seemed to stand apart and alone. A great pity for him that he had not been a poor man; that he had been left an orphan at the age when the character most stands in need of shaping and direction; that after an odd career of solitary adventure, which might have been traced by the benefits he spread around him as he went everywhere, Allan Garth should have acquired no deeper knowledge of the sphere to which he was born than that which is derived from merely primitive qualities, faith and trust,

for instance, in the 'duel of the sexes'—the qualities which if they displease us we can label bad form, bad style, *manque de tenue*, raw credulousness, crude folly, sickly boarding-school sentimentality, calf-love, *et cætera:* those qualities that lend themselves peculiarly to the stigma in a highly-civilized state of society.

Mr. Herbert reddened as his mind went back to certain fervid passages in Allan Garth's romance. He was a man of the world himself, he rather imagined; and his notions on the subject of the virile self-respect were extremely decided, excellent form. 'I tell you what it is,' he would not infrequently say, 'we are always looking in the wrong quarter for the angels and the goddesses. We are always looking for them among the women who were sent into the world to please the eye—to earn selection by the sculptor and the painter, gentlemen who will communicate quite frankly to the outer world their unbridled reverence for the corporeal perfections of the divinity, and who turn the divinity with a light heart into rent and taxes, into tradesmen's bills, the schooling of the children, the wages of John, Elizabeth, and Mary Ann. And then, because when we get close to the picture we find it flat, on a dead level nearly always the same, and because when we take the statue by the delicate fingers we discover that the contact sets us thinking, not of the realms above, but of the earth, of the stone-quarry, perhaps, within the earth, or—this case is not unknown—of what there may be under the earth: because of all this, some of us will vehemently deny altogether the angels and the goddesses who do exist for our salvation here below. Why, we live in the midst of them: but they are not, as a rule, to be discerned among the faultless beauties. No; the latter stray or intrude into their company sometimes, and will endeavour to simulate their heavenly ways. The faultless beauties do not shine there, though; they don't shine as goddesses and angels until erroneous Man, afflicted with a myopy, invades the cenacle, and straightway spoils everything, puts everything wrong.'

For the somewhat oracular train of thought in which, as the reader may have just seen, Mr. Herbert would occasionally indulge, his biographer must not be held at all answerable. He judged other people according to his own experiences, just as the reader, too, according to his or her

own experiences, has pronounced upon other people likewise, and will pronounce, into the bargain, upon this Mr. Herbert himself, with his oracular pronouncements.

A 'fashionable beauty!' Heavens—she was that, now! —reflected Mr. Herbert, with a tinge of bitterness that Evelyn was no less a personage than that now; and no more. A grand type of womanhood, they said. From the date of the *tableaux vivants* at Lord M——'s, there was not one portrait which you saw displayed more prominently by photographers than the portraits—the last new—the latest —a profile—three-quarter face—authorized publication—in falling snow—greatly-admired walking dress—on horseback —boating costume—with a lily—in ball-room attire—as Cressida—the magic semblances of Evelyn Ormond-Weir: the woman Allan Garth had lived for, and so vehemently had loved. Mr. Herbert had perused in the illustrated weekly journal edited by the brilliant Mrs. Carnaby Royster —everyone said she was brilliant, but when they said that, they meant all sorts of things—a detailed and gloating description of those private *tableaux vivants* at Lord M——'s. He himself went into some good sets, coteries where the Hon. Carnaby would have been made to feel that none of the people wished to meet with him again; and yet at the entertainments of the M. lot, where the Hon. and Mrs. C. Royster were familiars, everybody would have stared at him, turned from him, and wondered how he 'got in.' It must have been prior to the famous *tableaux vivants* that Allan Garth had quitted England—prior to that occasion—yes—but subsequently to Evelyn's marriage with Hugh Ormond-Weir. At their last meeting Garth had spoken to him with a sudden impulse as if half tempted into a confidence. They had gone out on the 'terrace' of an ornate and vulgar villa, new ground to Mr. Herbert; and as they leant against a high balustrade, in the deep shadow thrown by large-leaved, heavily-flowered odorous creeping plants, and looked back, across a conservatory, into the one section of the ball-room which stood out sharply visible, framed in the surrounding gloom, their talk had been loaded with a covert allusion, and insensibly they had wandered to the past. A voice had reached them from the conservatory, lamenting the great loss of the evening, the great disappointment—the absence of the newest meteor, Mrs. Ormond-

Weir. What was it Garth had then so enthusiastically begun: the souvenir he had left unfinished? The words had been few and rapid, the phrase incomplete; he could not recall them. But he remembered other words: the brusque interruption of his own stumbling references to the sway she exercised, this new meteor of society—the woman they had both known as Evelyn Farrar—the imperious girl whom Garth had known a little child.

'The charm for everyone is this'—Garth had exclaimed hurriedly—'that everyone sees in her some single trait that has always quickened his pulse from the very day he has first encountered it, no matter when, no matter where. They call it indescribable, the charm she exercises—indescribable because they all yield to it—all, all!—yes, because the charm is universal, when she chooses that it shall be so, even upon the sodden carcase, even to the empty head, they call it indescribable. The secret of it! In her smile, her eyes, her voice; in her *naïveté* as she speaks; in the subdued tones, almost contralto, that set the nerves vibrating when she chooses, as we shiver at some orchestral passage in Italian music; in the unfathomable eyes, too dark to be blue, but soft or ardent, as she chooses, vacant or soul-full, just as she chooses; in the smile, yes, by Heaven!—has she that smile from Heaven for good or for bad?—above all, in the unnerving smile.'

Exactly the effect he had himself tried to analyze, commented Mr. Herbert; it was unnerving, that unusual smile. As for the soul-full eyes, he had gazed into them with curiosity more than once—with challenge as well as with cool curiosity—but, for his own part, he had sought in vain for 'soul'—in vain, likewise, for remarkable softness.

We think in contrasts and similitudes. As he turned from the dun, commonplace artificial lake which a momentary disordered imagining had invested with mysterious guilt—the guilt of a silent pool planned by some evil principle in nature, haunted by the facile Naïad of crime tragically alluring and ever placid—as he once more bent his steps in the direction of that house, within a stone's-throw, whence the disappearance of Allan Garth had apparently been final, Mr. Herbert very sadly, in his mind, looked upon this picture and on this—upon the grace seated on the white brow of the black-haired Aphrodite whose name was Evelyn, and then

on his faint image of his homely friend. Garth had a smile, too, thought Mr. Herbert, and it was odd how inexpressively he smiled. Not a detail of his physiognomy revealed the spirit within. Downright ugliness would sometimes prove the luckiest of all possible endowments; people were so ready to infer tremendous intellectual force from seamed, forbidding features; and charlatans who happened to be physically repellent might possess a dual advantage over the Merely Beautiful of their immortal order, ugliness being, as the marriageable young French lady objected, 'not ephemeral, like beauty.' But Garth was unredeemed, so far as externals went, even by ugliness. A good masculine ugliness might have fascinated Evelyn Farrar; well, no—he was simply insignificant. Although, when he lounged in a room, he stood a shade taller than most of those present, the eye never rested on him. Garth had at times a certain smile, too, but it always seemed to stop short, and to fade away too soon. The happiness that is the sole magician of this world—that, after all, *can* paint the lily, and *can* gild refined gold—had been withheld from him; and when the smile which Mr. Herbert had seen once or twice did promise a transfiguration, too surely and too awkwardly it vanished, as if in despair at the ordeal of lighting up that terribly null countenance. A few days ago, how trivial to him all these matters would have appeared! But on trivial matters the momentous issues of our lives were continually depending. 'A pity Garth has always been a rich man,' repeated Mr. Herbert; 'if he had been poor enough, he had it in him to make a name.'

Yesterday the concierge at the house in the Rue de Monceau had made some incidental reference to the visit of a lady—an English *comtesse*, perhaps—could not pronounce positively as to the nation, but a person of rank, he should say, and, if English—*Sapristi!*——

The lady was accompanied by a person of the middle age, a Frenchwoman: not her maid, evidently, but not her equal, either: a *dame de compagnie, quoi!* Well, they had called shortly before the sudden departure of M. Garth. It was one afternoon when he, the concierge, had been left alone in charge of the lodge, his wife having gone to see her invalid aunt, to take her some alleviating presents from M. Garth himself, to whom they had spoken of her sad case,

and who was generosity embodied, and rich with that: *pas beau*, but of a goodness! M. Garth was perhaps a *lord* in his own country? No? Well, that didn't matter. He had a true distinction—the inelegance of the best world, and he looked all the more inelegant from being so tall. On that afternoon, M. Garth having just gone to bed, as the valet came downstairs and told them—oh, he lived! he led a life! —what should they see but a telegraph-messenger and a cab reaching the door at the same instant, both the cabman and the telegraph-messenger demanding M. Garth — M. Garth, who never before had received any telegram at that address, and who, as to visitors, resided in Paris in order to be alone. For he had once proffered that explanation, deeming it due, no doubt, on account of the seclusion in which he was enveloped, so far as the people of his own world were concerned. Odd, was it not—a man still young, rich, and not naturally inclined to debauch, because anybody could see that who had gone through the world a little—to see a man like that forcing himself to live a life like that! Madame Furet, concierge down the street, had said it was remorse.

'What became of the valet?' Mr. Herbert had inquired.

'Ch, the first could not stay; there was no animation for him, and he always required his masters to be gay, and to have confidence in him, trusting to his discretion.'

'Well, where is he?'

'Aristide? Oh, Aristide is dead. That was the first of the two. He left to be *valet de chambre* with the Baronne Roc, Rue de la Falaise, and died of a *chaud-et-froid*, a chill caught on a night they gave a ball.'

'And the other?'

'The other was Célestin, who liked his liberty, and was much grieved to part with M. Garth. The place just suited him. Célestin could not have told you more than I am telling you. It was Célestin who was here when that English lady made that visit; and I remember that he ran downstairs again, to say he was thunderstruck.'

'Who?'

'Célestin. It was Célestin who was thunderstruck.'

'Ah?'

'Yes. When he handed to his master the card which the English lady gave him, his master turned so white and

looked so frightful, and trembled so, that Célestin was transfixed. "I thought the end had come," said he to me—"I thought I should have to look out for another place to-morrow."'

'Did he read the name on the card?'

'No, he did not; which, as my wife told him afterwards, was a strange forgetfulness. There was writing on the card, but not in French. He searched everywhere for the card, subsequently, but never could find it. Then he listened at the door while they were talking, but, of course, he could not understand. Célestin thought that the illness had come all at once; we knew that the illness would come, some day. An existence like that! And never able to sleep! Célestin dressed him that afternoon; and, all the while, he did not say a single word to Célestin.'

'Did you remark the demeanour of these ladies—any agitation——'

'The younger—that is, the mistress, of course—was angry when they saw the telegram delivered. They had sent the telegram themselves, it appeared, to announce their visit; but telegrams—you know what telegrams are: expensive letters that don't hurry themselves—ha! ha! ha!'

'And when they went away?'

'Oh, I did not pay any attention. My wife had come back, and was telling me about her aunt. All that good wine would have been wasted on her aunt, and so she had brought some home again.'

That happened yesterday. Mr. Herbert, who knew his Paris, opened his present visit by dropping a small gold coin into the child's money-box, which stood upon the table of the lodge. The lodge-keeper's wife brought forward the best chair.

'Since yesterday,' said she, 'we have been turning over in our minds the occurrences which monsieur has more particularly inquired about. It was a love affair, that's certain; and I always said it was. Madame Furet, down the street, insisted for a long time that it was remorse: "There is a crime in his history," declared Madame Furet, "and he has come here to hide away, and he is tortured by remorse; and we shall see grave events in this street, mark my words." But I knew it was a *chagrin d'amour*, as we say—I knew it before he had been here a couple of days—a *chagrin*, but a

terrible one. You could see that he was for ever and ever turning the knife in the wound. You could see that he was only leading that life because he wanted to forget, and could not. I said that he was right, because otherwise what would have happened? He had no work for distracting his attention, and I could see the day—if he should cease, out of weariness or horror, living so madly—when this house would have been talked of in the newspapers. We should have had a suicide in this house.'

'Oh, you must be exaggerating,' suggested Mr. Herbert, with a return of his own doubts.

'No exaggeration at all! We had a case of suicide in the house we kept before we came here: a banker whose wife went off with a baritone singer who left her after three months to marry a rich widow, twice his age, who took the Bouffes-Gaulois for him, and made him the manager of it, and lost a great deal of money. Well, the banker went on for two or three weeks just like this, and then blew his brains out. We were sorry; he was a kind man. Ah, men are stupid!'

'To kill themselves for a woman? Stupid?—I should think so, indeed!' It was the jovial concierge who spoke. 'Do you know what the Baron Strümwanger said to me one day when I was in his service? "Gonsdant," he said—for Constant: that was the way he pronounced my name—"I have never failed when I wanted to make conquests." I was young then. "Never show respect for a woman, Gonsdant. We don't in Germany; we only pretend to; and never think about them in their absence." That was a Man, the man who said that!'

'Big imbecile you are!' exclaimed the concierge's wife, fondly brushing a speck of dust from his coat.

'Here is my wife; do you think she would have married me and made me happy if I had been respectful? I might have done better, truly, with my figure; but as to the argument—*voyons*, Nini, was I respectful?'

'Imbecile, *va!*' repeated the concierge's wife, laughing.

'Come,' said Mr. Herbert, flushing; 'what are your other souvenirs with reference to the visit you were telling me of?'

'The lady—the English lady?' returned the lodge-keeper. 'Ah, that was one that you *could* say was a handsome woman! Oh, the handsome woman!'

He took his pipe out of his mouth, and kissed his hand up at the ceiling.

Mr. Herbert glanced at the man with a sudden fury. The broad, pink visage of this fat ex-domestic wore a leer of which the offensive character was heightened by the tone and manner of his patronizing estimate. Constant launched some further phrases of the same tenor, happily unconscious of the anger which had momentarily reduced his listener to absolute silence. Constant had served in the best houses. He was perfectly well satisfied with his own imitation of many amongst his betters. He had acquired his tone in the best 'houses,' from the best masters.

'I should like to kick this fellow,' thought Mr. Herbert, in a vein unusual with him. No doubt he could have gratified his wish. But—before he made himself the champion of an absent fair, would it not be just as well to be quite sure that, all things considered, the absent fair would have desired his championship? How did he know that they were not welcome—testimonies by the type of Panegyrist whom, with the bias of his sex and sentiment, he chose to look upon as insolent and vulgar? After all—what! These were but testimonies to 'points'; and the fair themselves, pure maidens, rasping mothers, or great-aunts, with hordes of liveried fellows like this in their service, discussed the points of their own social sisters with a similar irreverence and not an equal admiration. And there were likewise such points as the dimensions of a man's balance at his banker's, the chances of the man's elder brother's death, the dubious prospect of an early widowhood—these and other points, he knew, the fair debated in the drawing-room candidly. Also —well, well—only the candour would be arrested there. Why, then, should he take upon himself to cavil at the tribute of the masculine appraiser? The process was indulged in frequently enough with the *rôles* reversed. It had stung him, the gross eulogium of this menial; but in the lady's ears it might have sounded differently. The lady might not thank him for officious resentment. The lady might thank him, too. Bah!—the lady might recoil with every show of outraged dignity, and in her heart institute comparisons between this low-souled creature and himself. Himself? Who was he, then, to set himself above his fellow? Was he worth more than this man, or another?

Honourable descent; fortune; a lofty standard, the result of necessitated associations—where lay his personal merit in it all? Was he to assume superiority because this man had chanced to wound him by irreverence for a woman? Was not the man's worth equal to his own? Mr. Herbert remembered ladies of his acquaintance who lived farther west than the South Kensington Museum who would have instantly replied in the affirmative. They would have answered him in their sweetest manner, watching him steadily as very likely he flinched. And the best of it was that their affirmative would not have been sincere.

We look to women to raise us, Mr. Herbert ran on—foolishly, too often, we look to them. The fault must be our own if too generally we are disappointed; we ask of too many what but a few can give: although those few are indeed divine. When, however, a man tells the woman he loves that he feels unworthy of her, he means that he himself is capable of ideals that diminish him—he means that he prays to see the woman he loves worthy of himself, at his best. The world, which rarely shares the fervour of his enthusiasms, mocks at these 'illusions' when they come to light. Happy for us when the loved one, also, has not smiled at us behind her fan, behind our backs—smiled or gaped! Thrice happy if——

'Perhaps it all turned out well, the love affair,' continued the lodge-keeper's wife; 'it was only a few weeks after the visit of the English lady that M. Garth went away.'

The Tekels of this life were melancholy, not laughable. They were to be mourned, not mocked at. How bitterly hard, on either side, to accept the fiat of plain justice, and to register 'Found wanting' against the name so loved!

'A great change had come over him in the course of those few weeks. Perhaps he went away to join her, and it ended well.'

'If so, he is not in Paris,' returned the husband.

'Why?' asked Mr. Herbert.

'I remember well that Célestin distinguished in the conversation that they must return by Boulogne on the following morning. They were much hurried.'

'The lady was not an English resident in Paris, then, you think?'

'Oh, surely not,' said the lodge-keeper's wife. 'She was

richly dressed, and with elegance, I don't deny; but it was not a Parisian toilette.'

'And the companion?'

'French—but—something out of the way; not Parisian. From the provinces, perhaps—although, as far as we could judge, she had no provincial accent. A Parisian who lives abroad, perhaps.'

'Middle-aged?'

'Yes.'

'Hair slightly gray, masculine features, complexion dead white?'

'Yes; and in her bearing something austere. It was she who made the inquiries of us when they left. Her lips just opened, and shut down again. When she spoke, it was like someone tapping on a wooden table with an ivory hammer. "There is one who would not make an indulgent mistress," I said to my husband.'

'What inquiries?'

'Curious inquiries: as to whether M. Garth had not been very ill; as to whether he received visits, or seemed to have acquaintances. The other listened while she asked. They found him changed, no doubt.'

'That would be some time in the month of March, last year?'

'About that time, because he went away a day or two before the 15th April, rent-day, and paid us everything in advance, in lieu of notice; as he paid Célestin in advance and everybody else.'

'And do you know what became of Célestin?'

'Célestin took a situation to travel with a Russian prince. He wrote to us that he was enriching himself, but not happy, seeing the violences of the prince.'

'He listened, you say—Célestin?'

'Well, you know what it is, a domestic servant—that is always inquisitive—a domestic servant!'

'Not unwise, either, to be inquisitive!' broke in the husband, a leer upon his florid visage. 'What you learn! What the masters and the mistresses hide from one another, and what you know! Sometimes we let them know we know, and sometimes we don't. Ah, if I could write a good round hand. The public would read *my* little memoirs, *allez!*'

'Oh, Baptiste,' sighed the lodge-keeper's wife, 'do, do

become an author or a journalist! You could do it while you are resting after sweeping down the grand staircase.'

'Not a journalist,' replied her husband, despondingly; 'too difficult—you have to understand too many things, and be trained—I read about it the other day; we are great readers, monsieur; we take the paper every morning. But if Sélina—Sélina is an authoress, monsieur; we know her sister, a laundress, a good girl, monsieur, but the other had all the good looks, monsieur, and has got on—if that Sélina can become an authoress, why should not I?'

'Yes, become an authoress,' exclaimed his wife—'do, Baptiste—write under the name of a woman, and then you can say what you like. No one could trouble you. They would be cowards to attack a woman!'

'Ah, I guarantee that I would entertain the public; and all true; only it would offend powerful people. And then there is putting it together; though that can't be difficult; you have only got to sit down. But it's the handwriting!' he added ruefully—'that's what discourages you!'

Mr. Herbert waited. He knew his Paris. Whilst professing to attend the School of Law, and the Sorbonne classes, he had amused himself in Paris from the age of twenty to the age of twenty-two. He waited for the machine to run down.

Presently, he took the little child upon his knee. 'Can you say "Garth"?' demanded this adroit Mr. Herbert.

'Oh yes—she can say it,' interposed the mother. 'And well she recollects him. He took notice of her, always. You remember him, the monsieur *pas beau?*'

'*Oh vi!*' lisped the child.

'He was good to you, was he not?'

'*Oh vi!*' the child repeated.

'Aussi tu l'aimais bien?'

'Pour sûr, que je l'aimais bien!'

'And so Célestin listened?' resumed Mr. Herbert.

'He listened. The English lady talked as if she were urging reasons. But M. Garth did not talk. He seemed to put a question now and then; and sometimes the English lady would seem to turn to the companion, and the companion replied. The companion addressed her as 'madame,' not as 'mademoiselle.' We know that well enough; we discussed it afterwards; but that is all we do know.'

'But while he was with you he received letters from time to time?'

'Yes, but not often; from abroad they were.'

'And he left no direction, when he went away, as to the letters which might continue to arrive?'

'None. We asked him; and he said that none would come.'

'But letters did arrive for him afterwards?'

'No, not one.'

Representing Gray, Longley, and Gray, Mr. Herbert had himself written to Allan Garth on a mere matter of form, at least three months later than the date of his disappearance. The letter had been addressed to the Rue de Monceau, and the firm had received a word of acknowledgment, signed, duly, by Allan Garth. The latter had made no mention of any fresh address; although, now that his mind went back to the circumstance, Mr. Herbert remembered having remarked upon a certain delay in the acknowledgment of their communication. An arrangement with the district post-office, no doubt, for the delivery of letters to a fresh address. But all this pointed to the adoption of some definite resolve. Why should Garth have aimed so strenuously at such a self-obliteration?

The idea which suddenly crossed his mind smote him with the keenest pang of all.

'When you see a man struck by a great grief'—the words had slumbered in his memory: where had he heard or read them?—'when you see a man who has been struck by a great grief seek isolation, plunge into absolute solitude—disappear—you may affirm, without hesitation, that that man has entered upon the highroad to insanity.'

Mr. Herbert took his leave, announcing the probable visit of a compatriot, or possibly a French gentleman, who might endeavour to carry these inquiries further. For any assistance rendered to that gentleman the concierge would be well recompensed. In the meantime—it was a matter of no importance, but—people high-placed—and—suppose we did not gossip on the subject with our neighbours? Discretion was to be paid for, of course, and—though it really did not in the least signify, but—family susceptibilities—uselessness of wounding people, powerful people, by chance para-

graphs in sensational broad-sheets, and—proper discretion would be properly rewarded.

'. . . You may affirm without hesitation that that man has entered upon the road to insanity.'

Or woman, either—for the matter of that? No. In passive endurance women proved themselves superior to us, meditated Mr. Herbert, as he wended his way towards the residence of old Mr. Carteret Gibbs, with whom he was staying. Their sufferings they could conceal with that most marvellous of all heroisms—the feminine. A woman broke her heart in silence, lived patiently to a ripe age, and even grew stout. In due course, despite the broken heart, she would become the matron and the grandmamma; and there would be no kindly matron more full of gentle sympathy than she, and there would be no wiser, no more unselfish, no more compassionate grandmamma.

'. . . That man is on the highroad to insanity.'

Yes, or woman either; and it was precisely that amazing heroism of theirs which drove them onward to the same awful goal. 'Be just, my boy,' said Mr. Herbert to himself. More women reached that goal than men.

Perhaps insanity—perhaps crime—perhaps suicide. Not crime, in the case of Allan Garth. Garth was the last man to commit suicide. What then?

What then? Turn to the statistics of the lunatic asylum. Glance through the half-year's report, and look into the tables of the closing pages. You mock! Ah—enviable light heart! If you can mock at what you read in those bare business-like returns, why—you should take your morning walks in the churchyards, laugh over epitaphs, sketch caricatures below 'In memory of,' spurn with your foot the grass-grown mound of earth beneath which lies—a broken heart, perhaps—a droll case, perhaps, from the lunatic asylum tabulated statement. Mock—O enviable light heart! The droll case lies there, defenceless: mere mouldering remains, the frame that once was man or woman; the body that, whilst it yet lived, wasted ludicrously under its secret anguish. Mock at the broken-heart; or disbelieve. The man or woman shall not hear your words; the eyes cannot look at you reproachfully; the mouth will not quiver at your peal of laughter; at no shaft of your impatient scorn can the sufferer once more shrink

—the sufferer who succumbed. Mock! Like these are to be your own remains, one day—malodorous, it seems—and to the view — O heavens! Jeer: turn from the picture which offends you by its truth, and still jeer; shut the book up which contains the picture, fling it from you, and still jeer. You are flinging from you into the fire printed pages enclosed within a cover: the bookbinder's materials, not the book. And when your last gibe shall have been uttered, when diastole and systole have ceased, what kind of grief shall you have merited, who shall condole with those who are bereaved of you, Unenviable light heart?

There may be seen among the harmless patients wandering in the gardens of the lunatic asylum men and women who smile strangely at the sunshine, and who will deck their garments with a rank weed they think forget-me-not, or with some hoarded, shapeless flower, that left its fragrance with their lost life. The same sunshine smiled upon them formerly; in the same sunshine formerly they wandered, hand-in-hand with happiness and hope. This flower they cherish has been in contact with the loved hand that was one day drawn away from them by death, estrangement, or caprice. The men and women, decked with weeds and smiling strangely on celestial sunbeams, will perchance bow and curtsy to the unseen, and upon the unseen lavish all their pitiful winsomenesses—oh, surely of all airs and graces the most poignant for the spectator—the most ghastly, the most humiliating! They will drone trite love-ballads out of tune; whisper of the same rendezvous with the same absent one, always; rapturously peruse treasured letters which are blank sheets of paper furnished by the keepers; press to their lips adored signatures, invisible.

The Garth inquiry would need the skill and methods of an expert, concluded Mr. Herbert. A detective would be employed here, and would be instructed to confer with him. He himself would remain in Paris to await the issue of the investigation. Did he at length hold the commencement of a clue? If so, what might not be the dramatic surprises which the near future had in store for them?

Evelyn herself, accompanied by Andréa—Madame Bertaux; that those were the two visitors of whose hurried arrival at the Rue de Monceau the concierge had been speaking, Mr. Herbert entertained no doubt. Following

closely upon that interview occurred the disappearance of Allan Ridgeway Garth.

A timely thing for the contingent reversioner, if they could prove the death of Allan Garth. The reversionary interest accrued to Evelyn's husband, Hugh Ormond-Weir. A timely thing, indeed, for that ruined profligate, Ormond-Weir, reflected Mr. Herbert, with a certain grimness; a last service rendered by poor Garth to the woman he had worshipped.

Opportune for Evelyn herself, and excellent for the prospects of the younger sister, 'who must be coming on, now—when will they bring her out?' Suppose it were shown, however, that Garth was of unsound mind? In that event, Hugh Ormond-Weir would have to wait a little. There would be the appointment of a Committee in Lunacy; Garth would be placed under restraint—when they found him; and the Burroughes estate would go into the Court of Chancery.

Upon the issue of the mission to discover Allan Garth, a sensation drama in real life perhaps depended.

CHAPTER II.

Mr. Carteret Gibbs (cousin to the Throgmorton Street Gibbs—Tobias Walthamstow) grumbled aloud as he glanced at the superscription of an oblong envelope which his domestic had just brought in with other missives bearing the London postmark. Mr. Gibbs and his guest were at the breakfast-table, in the former's pleasant suite of bachelor's apartments.

'C. Gibbs, Esq., Rue Beaujon, and all the rest of it,' grumbled the host—'beautiful flourishes and insufficient postage. Appeal for funds, on behalf of Home for the Homeless, Brompton. More functionaries than inmates. Why can't they call me by my name? My name is Carteret. And Carteret Gibbs is a name that is known. But "C. Gibbs, Esq.!" Anyone would think I had been christened Charles!'

'Don't you like "Charles"?' replied Mr. Herbert absently. He was studying a blue envelope which had

arrived for himself. The envelope exhibited the office-stamp of Gray, Longley and Grey. 'A very good name, "Charles"?'

'My name is Carteret, not Charles—Carteret; and if I give any hospital half a dozen beds, I want the donation to be recorded as the Carteret Gibbs donation, not the C. Gibbs. *You* know I am not vain, George; and puffery is a thing I hate. But my ancestors shall be honoured, by Gad! I shall give these Brompton fellows nothing until they can learn who I am. When I was visiting the United States they never made a mistake about my name; and the way they honoured my ancestors was gratifying, by Gad! They christened their children after me and my ancestors. Did your poor father ever tell you of our explorations, when we were boys, into the genealogical traditions of my mother's side of the family, the Cliffshire Carterets? No? Well, he didn't care much about genealogy. But when you come down with me to the International Hospital here, I'll show you the children's ward I made them a present of; and there you'll see my name over the doorway at each end, and painted across the wall, inside—Carteret Gibbs, not C. Gibbs!'

'I wonder whether they have any news for me,' said Mr. Herbert, still absently studying the office-stamp.

'The Garth business you told me of?'

'Yes, the inquiry.'

'Pity I was travelling while this Mr.—ah—ah—Garth—was here. That was the time I was in the United States. Ought not to be over-difficult to trace, your Mr. Garth. Universal legatee of Elliot Burroughes—humph—hah! Good thing for him; big estate—big estate. Never met Burroughes myself. My cousin of Throgmorton Street knew him. Wasn't there some action—right of way, easement——?'

'Burroughes *v.* Gibbs—yes. We were the plaintiff's advisers. We have always acted for Burroughes; and Ormond-Weir, his stepson, is our client too. You knew, perhaps, that Ormond-Weir was the stepson?'

'No, I was not aware of the exact relationship. I read a sort of sketch of "Mrs. Ormond-Weir at Home," in some sort of a society review one day, and deuced smart it was, too. I thought, although the fellow that wrote it took a

d——d sarcastic tone, that ought to be put down; but, really, you know, living out of it, you know, as I do—Paris my headquarters, and half my time spent somewhere else about the Continent—I feel like a provincial—now I do, now—'pon my honour, like an old fogey of a provincial!'

Mr. Carteret Gibbs had much more the aspect of the well-preserved old fop, whose foppishness has never been too extravagant, than that of the ill-preserved old fogey. Nor was he particularly old, either, when you came to reckon years. He was not too bald, and might have boasted of his admirable complexion if he had belonged to one of the countries the males of which think about such matters as their own complexions. The morning canter in the Bois would bring the ruddiest of glows into his Anglo-Saxon cheeks, and his light-blue eyes were still keen, during the first part of the day. The appetite was not quite what it had been, and he regretted the circumstance. He was beginning to love his ease too much, declared his doctor, an old friend who drank water at his meals, but came to dine with him rather frequently, and who talked English party politics right through dinner.

'Elliot Burroughes did not marry until late in life,' explained Mr. Herbert. 'He married a widow, a Mrs. Weir, who had one child—this fellow, Hugh. The name Ormond was adopted for the boy from an uncle, on his mother's side, who left him a considerable fortune. Mrs. Weir and her son would have made anybody but a man like Burroughes utterly wretched. Burroughes was not a man to be made wretched by anyone. He has been a profitable client to Gray, Longley, and Gray: always ready to go to law: unsparing of the other side until they gave way, or until he had won, and then unexpectedly generous. In the same fashion, too, he would back up any enterprise longer than anybody else, if he had once given his adhesion to it; but, should he find out in the end that he had been trifled with or deceived, no one would be more merciless. His stepson pleased him immensely, for a long time. I think the old boy rather liked to hear about Ormond-Weir's profligacies: everything went on capitally until the gambling stories leaked out. Do you remember those exposures?'

'Not I—not I! What the name recalls to my mind is a Divorce Court scandal, in which Burroughes's nephew, as I

understood he was, had—what on earth was it——? The Fawsitts of our county were mixed up in it.'

'Ah, that was his *début*. Well, he wound up by ruining himself. To do himself justice, Ormond-Weir never went to his stepfather for assistance. At the mother's death a will was executed by Elliot Burroughes bequeathing nearly the whole of his real and personal estate to Ormond-Weir. The stepson had always been taught by his mother to regard himself as the eventual heir, and no doubt he had altogether accustomed himself to the prospect of inheriting. But he made no demands upon Elliot Burroughes, and through all his escapades never compromised him. No; apart from the gambling transactions in England and on the Continent, transactions in which he had only compromised himself, the people he compromised were always women. When the smash arrived, he set himself afloat again by a marriage.'

'Ah—the fashionable beauty?'

'Well—she is very generally admired, of course,' said Mr. Herbert, with a certain irritability.

'More than that, if I remember rightly,' continued his host. 'There was a fashion paper that hinted at sentimental overtures by an illustrious personage; and——'

'I know—I know.'

Mr. Herbert had not yet opened the blue envelope. He passed the blade of his penknife between the upper folds.

'Anything in the hints?' demanded Mr. Carteret Gibbs, helping himself to a liqueur.

'Yes—lies.'

'Eh—what?'

'Lies.'

'Well, but—lies are actionable, aren't they, if defamatory? How's the law?'

'Are you speaking of a fashion journal edited by a lady?'

'My dear boy, how on earth should I know who edits the fashion papers?'

'Because there was a Ladies' Journal which a lady edits—it gave a portrait of "Mrs. Ormond-Weir as Juno" in some senseless amateur burlesque.'

'That was the paper I saw. A devilish fine woman, by Gad!' Mr. Carteret Gibbs placed his liqueur-glass in a ray of sunshine which had crept to the corner of the breakfast

table. 'A devilish fine woman!' he repeated mechanically, observing an effect of colour.

Mr. Herbert did not answer. He ran his penknife along the top of the envelope, and took out the letter.

'Well, what about this "Gorgon, Hydra, and Chimera dire"—this editress of the objectionable journal?'

'Why, we had good ground of action, but the thing was settled before we had gone on far.'

'Settled! Short of money, the husband of the Juno?

> '"Juno—D'you know
> What I mean to say—ay—"

Remember that?—the old days—original cast? No? Before your time, though. Ah! short of the necessary for the establishment! Perhaps it was no libel—hey?—hush-up—illustrious personage—hey?'

'The insinuations were utterly untrue. Ormond-Weir settled the case, for I don't know how much, half down, and half at three months. This is quite between ourselves, of course. For my part, with a case like that, I would have gone on, shut up the fashion paper, "written for ladies, by ladies," and exposed the whole band of slanderous women. One or two of their paragraphs came into my hands; and the vilest of them was written by—whom do you think?—the wife of the man who preaches at the Kensington "Fold"!'

'You don't suppose that surprises me, do you?'

'Well, I don't know! It staggered me, and I'm no lambkin.'

'Are you not? Are you not just a little bit of a lambkin still, my fine fellow? This Mrs. Ormond-Weir, this fashionable beauty, this young married woman who exhibits herself as Galatea to the Pygmalion of your poetry—noble Duke, at a morning performance in a West-End theatre for a charitable purpose, if you please—why, there are the loveliest portraits of her in the photographers' shops along the Rue de Rivoli here—they put her with the *demi-mondaines* and the crowned heads of Europe—this young married lady who disrobes in public——'

'No, no!'

'What?'

'Don't go on.' Mr. Herbert had paled a little. 'You are wrong—you are unjust. You don't understand the story.'

'"Story"! I don't know what "stories" there may be to be "understood,' and I don't want to know. I know what I see, and I know what I read. I know what the London correspondents of the leading French newspapers have said about this Mrs. Ormond-Weir from time to time: and why shouldn't they, as men of the world, form their own judgments? "Story"! If a woman in society cannot resist her vanity—very well: let her yield to it: *I* don't mind, I'm sure. Let her show herself in silk tights and pretend she does it to help the poor. I am sorry for the husband, poor old Sir Peter, or plethoric Sir Lemuel Uxorious, prince of the tea trade. She prefers that sort of thing to useful, ennobling work; all right. I pay for my front seat in the stalls, and I review her—yes, and, by Gad. sir, so does the fellow upstairs in the gallery, and very likely finds fault, too——'

'I know all this,' interrupted Mr. Herbert, paler still; 'but you wrong her—poor Evelyn—if you think that——'

'"Evelyn"?'

'I had a slight acquaintance with her prior to the marriage, the very slightest, but——'

'My young friend, you are not indifferent in that quarter.'

'Nonsense! Besides, to a man of honour——'

'Lambkin!'

'If you like,' said Mr. Herbert coldly. 'Finish what you have to say against such people as the Mrs. Clay-Trevellian, for whom there was no excuse, and Lady Poyns, who has gone with her enamel to New York—and then, without betraying any secrets, I can exonerate Mrs. Ormond-Weir in two sentences.'

'Exonerate her! Do they take her to the photographer's by force, and put her by force into those costumes and those poses? Exonerate her? Poor creature! I suppose she has her commissions from the photographers, who all bid one against the other? I suppose she gets her cheques from Glee, the artistic soap-man, when she adds her testimony to that of "yours sincerely, Jezebel Poyns." I saw it the other day inside the cover of a railway guide—"I certainly prefer your soap to any other—E. Ormond-Weir." My man went down to the English chemist's for me, and

bought me a liniment for rheumatic pains; the bottle was wrapped up in a leaflet recommending a nostrum for I don't know what, and a Peruvian Dentifrice, and at the top of the leaflet was the eternal head, and the eternal facsimile of the invariable "I certainly prefer." Why, is not that the woman of whom they say that she never looks at ordinary acquaintances as she speaks to them, or, as she deigns to listen, hardly opens her eyes, so precious and so wonderful they are? Think of it!—Just only think of it! Gracious heavens!'

Mr. Herbert could not answer. He was well aware of that particular piece of folly.

'Read your letter, my boy—read your letter!' Mr. Carteret Gibbs spoke in a tone of mingled commiseration and contempt. He rose, yawned, and moved to the nearest window. 'Read your letter.'

'Yes,' said Mr. Herbert, without opening it.

How this old loafer about the globe had suddenly humbled him! For what he had set down as snobbishness, he had actually been despising old Carteret Gibbs. And here was the latter, by a rough speech or two about a woman whom he, George Herbert, took no interest in, of course, except the interest of an attorney for his client, making him, the man of the world, the adviser in troublous legal intricacies —feel all at once like an untaught, arrant urchin. Was he, indeed, in matters that concerned one—one woman in this world—the woman who could, of course, be nothing to him —but the ordinary lambkin, with the lambkin's trust and feebleness?

No; he knew Evelyn's history for the past two years. It was unjust to confound her with the Clay-Trevellians, and the rest of the ladies whose signatures pursued even the passenger by the twopenny omnibus. He had never striven to meet those ladies, as they came out, one after the other; when their respective turns had arrived for the due social eclipse, he had not regarded them as fit objects for a decent sympathy. Lady Poyns had perhaps been an exception. Jezebel was not at all a bad fellow. *She* had the birth, at any rate, and was free, consequently, from the sickening pretences to distinction which the others laboured at. But there were the Verona Dudlays, who angled, and, when their lines snapped, took the second-hand damaged

fishing-tackle into Court, and made their fortunes. The Verona Dudlays! Ha! They went upon the stage afterwards, to exhibit themselves. The stalls said of the Verona Dudlays:

'A little champagne on board this evening—haw! haw! —wonder what her brand is! Haven't seen that any of the wine-houses are advertising her—"I always take your dry champagne; I am never without a bottle of it"—haw! haw!'

The dress-circle said:

Brother: 'Awf'ly nice girl!'

Sister: 'How well she manages to keep her profile before the spectators—there—do you see? It's her profile that's so good, you know!'

Ma: 'And so that is the designing, brazen hussy, is it? *Well!*'

Pa: 'My dear Nicholson, do you know that I can never, without the profoundest sadness, look upon the spectacle of a charming and innocent young girl, such as this, adopting the stage as a profession of her best years. No one who has daughters of his own can possibly refrain from deploring,' etc., etc., etc.

The upper boxes pronounced it nothing short of ethereal —the impersonation; and the errand boys in the sixpenny gallery preferred the physique of Mrs. Clay-Trevellian. Well, but what could it all matter to him, George Herbert, and why did he permit it to engage his mind? Then there was Mrs. Clay-Trevellian, who purchased an engagement at the Pall Mall Theatre; played to crowded stalls and empty pits; was advised by the critics to study orthoëpy—or to take lessons in stage elocution, seeing that, of the two, it was better to be artificial than totally ignorant—Mrs. Clay-Trevellian, upon whose capabilities an eminent French essayist had based a frightfully learned article on 'The Decline of the British Theatre.' Well, what the devil did it all matter to him, George Herbert? You could not—no, no—you could not confound Evelyn, Evelyn Ormond-Weir, with impudent adventuresses of the Clay-Trevellian type.

'Listen to me, George,' broke in Mr. Carteret Gibbs; 'you mustn't get falling in love with this Mrs. Ormond-Weir.'

'My dear uncle'—Mr. Gibbs was not the speaker's uncle. Mr. Herbert had no uncles; nor was Mr. Carteret

Gibbs the possessor of a single nephew. The avuncular relation thus gratuitously conferred upon him was a survival from the nursery period, when fond and foolish people will teach some of us to greet as if they were indeed our uncles and our aunts, the casual ladies and gentlemen who, with a rash good nature, have constituted themselves our adult friends—'my dear uncle, how can any man of honour——'

'Yes, yes; I have talked like that, myself,' interrupted the elderly gentleman lounging at the window. 'But no fellow worth anything at all is going to let that part him from the woman he loves—provided he is certain that she loves him, too.'

'Those are no doctrines of mine,' returned Mr. Herbert again.

'*Ta, ta, ta!* Now, this Mrs. Thingumbob must be half-way through her innings, from what I can tell, as an outside observer. A dev'lish handsome woman, she must be!—but it'll go—it'll go, George! I give her two years more; and then I shall expect to hear from my confectioner that the *bonbon* boxes with her portrait on the cover are no longer manufactured. In three years' time they'll be refusing the boxes out in Canada, and away at the Cape of Good Hope.'

Garth had at least been spared this desecration of the idol.

'There goes Prince Negradska, with his pair of bays,' continued the host, gazing along the street. 'Ever met the Princess?'

'What is her name?'

'Negradska.'

'No—never.'

'You ought to meet her. Wants to "do" the next London season.'

'Russian spy—or Nihilist—or an old lady muddler of diplomatic business?'

'Not at all. Young French blonde. Negradska's a Pole. Drives the finest pair of bays in Paris. Fine establishment, just over there. You ought to meet the Princess. A distraction for you. The Prince is getting tired of her. She was getting tired of the Prince about twelve months ago.'

Garth should have been a mere Negradska—a Gibbs. Ah—the should-have-beens, the might-have-beens!—Words, words!

'French blonde the Princess. Fair hair, without any—what do you call it, now, in English: Sheen?—shimmer?—"Shimmery sheen," or "Sheeny shimmer," I saw somewhere in print, the other day; what is that?—without any lustre; don't you know? Dead fair hair, very dark eyebrows, and darker eyes. Fascinating.'

'Ah?' said Mr. Herbert wearily, opening his letter.

'You ought to meet her, and she'd like to know you. Come round to one of their evenings. She—well, I'll see what impression she makes upon you, and then perhaps I'll relate an episode or two, and a rumour.'

'Oh, nothing to her discredit, pray! I am sick of hearing scandal about women.'

'Humph! That's rather a crusher for the sex, isn't it? You didn't mean it, perhaps, because, all things considered, George, in these affairs you take after your father, poor old fellow; but it *is* a little strong, hey?'

Mr. Herbert did not answer. He was engrossed by the communication from the firm.

'To his last day, your father was the champion of the weaker sex, as we used to say, then, with more justice than we say it now. I can compare two generations, George, and I was almost going to say that they don't need much championing now. Your father was right, poor old fellow; for your dear mother was a noble, true, inspiring woman, whose mere presence gave the most experienced amongst us a new faith in the sex. Her thoughts were so lofty, her gentleness so constant, she had a belief so fervent in what we usually consider unattainable ideals, that she would raise us all—the most worldly of us—far above ourselves. To have been blessed by the affection and the confidence of your dear mother, George, was to be for ever the debtor of her sisters, everywhere, throughout the world.'

The countenance of his listener had become set and stern. He now read the closing passages again.

'There are latitudes and longitudes where they are, nowadays, not the weaker but the stronger sex; and morals have not precisely benefited by the change. My doctor tells me that for the study of nervous disorders no finer field exists than those very longitudes and latitudes. Your dear mother? While she was with us she made us all capable of conquering anything.'

'My mother!' said Mr. Herbert, in a low tone, his eyes glistening. 'She was the last of the good women.'

Mr. Carteret Gibbs wheeled round from the window, and sauntered to his former place. He had been speaking with a more serious accent than was his wont.

'I was afraid,' said he, 'that you still had your lambkin moments. But I see you are sensible. You mustn't expect, you know, George, that your father's lot can be your own. You mustn't expect to meet another woman like your mother. I was afraid that you were trying to delude yourself. This Mrs. Osmond-Weir is too much in your thoughts.'

'Not more so than her sister.'

'Her sister?'

'Whom I have never seen. You may judge, therefore——'

'Another fashionable beauty, the sister? Does it run in the family? A fashionable beauty just gone off, or a candidate for notoriety soon to be coming on—which? Thank heaven they don't tolerate such ridiculous institutions in this country. Is the sister one more of the "I certainly prefer your toilette-vinegar" class of person?'

'I say that I have never seen her. She is the younger sister. There must be six or seven years' difference in their ages. They are all our clients, of course; but this younger sister has been kept at boarding-school until, I believe, quite lately. They are nothing to me, personally. The family are clients of Gray, Longley, and Gray; just as, up to a certain period, the Garth family, also, were clients of the firm.'

'Ah, by the way—how does your missing Englishman come to be the universal legatee of old Elliot Burroughes, with his £650,000?'

'Burroughes and Garth's father had been friends as young men. They quarrelled suddenly and bitterly. No one ever knew why—not even Gray, Longley, and Gray, who had been confidential advisers to them both, and from whom Garth's father at once transferred his business. No one had ever known why they quarrelled, until the other day, when Elliot Burroughes died. Then—we understood.'

'Well?'

'The feminine influence, of course.'

'D——m!'

'It's a damnable iteration, indeed,' said Mr. Herbert moodily. 'If they would only use their influence for good!'

'Rivalry?'

'Rivalry. And some other woman persuaded Burroughes that the girl he loved had openly and cruelly amused herself at his expense—was laughing at him with his own friend. Then began their struggle in real earnest.'

'Ah?'

'Burroughes made his mind up to ruin his old friend, or to be ruined himself in the endeavour. They were very quiet over it, and had it not been for the sealed letter to Gray, Longley, and Gray, which he left with his last will, we should never have got at the real reason of their hostility. Endless litigation they had. Burroughes was always manœuvring for the creation of debts against the other man, in order to buy them up.'

'And what came of it?'

'Oh, Burroughes played the deuce with the Garths. Both his old rival and his old love died suddenly, within the same year; and then Burroughes followed up their child, Allan.'

'By Jove!'

'I think he only wanted the satisfaction of bringing about a catastrophe. He was just the kind of man to make immediate amends, and to repair all harm as well as possible.'

'Make amends! Write out a cheque in reparation!'

'Well, he didn't like to be beaten.'

'My cousin beat him, though, if I remember rightly. Tobias Walthamstow Gibbs, of Throgmorton Street, beat him on that question of easement?'

'Yes; in Burroughes *v.* Gibbs the defendant got a verdict.'

'A deuced lucky thing for the lady that she didn't marry Elliot Burroughes.'

'Well, I dare say the disappointment warped him; and evil tongues added to the mischief. The Mrs. Weir he married, later on, was a showy sort of widow, one of the athletic widows, you know—with an athletic young son. She broke her neck at a five-barred gate, and poor old Burroughes could not mourn her, though he tried. He had a Chancery suit pending with Allan Garth, and, towards the

end, I don't believe there was anything else in this world which amused him. The revulsion of feeling happened oddly: oddly?—no—it was plain human nature! The revulsion of feeling happened when Evelyn Farrar married the stepson of old Elliot Burroughes.'

'I see,' said Mr. Carteret Gibbs, beginning to pace to and fro; 'then Garth——'

'Allan Garth had known the Farrar family from his boyhood. He was older than Evelyn by several years; but as she grew up they seemed to drift into the sort of comradeship that leads to marriages.'

'Commonplace marriages.'

'Well, perhaps so. Garth could never have been commonplace, however; but then, the fervour was only on one side—on his. She had grown up to be accustomed to him, and that was all. When she left him, so tranquilly, in the midst of their engagement, you would have said——'

Mr. Herbert paused, as if after all he could not bring himself to utter a reproach.

'I know,' rejoined the other; 'I have seen it. Marvellous. Not the shadow of a scruple—not the faintest twinge of conscience. Splendid. No man would wish to bind a woman to her pledge——'

'There was no consecrated pledge here,' interrupted Mr. Herbert desperately.

'To any pledge she may have given—in act, by word, vaguely—no matter how; no man would wish to keep her to her pledge against her will; but that is not the point at all. What I am studying for an instant is the feminine attitude itself under those circumstances, from the point of view of ethics. Charming. No—I have been right in life—I am sure I have been right. I could not have preserved this excellent health, and a disposition which is tolerably equable, if in my own home, my own—actually my own—home, under, you may say, my very own roof, I had been pestered with the average of feminine society. If it is only the average of feminine society—by Gad, sir—let us not allow it to invade our private lives! I am sure I have been right. I need not tell *you*, George, that I am only talking of the average, the German-silver article that floods the market; and, as an old man, who has lived and seen and known, I may be allowed to say what young men may not

even when they find it out. Nor need I tell you that it was once my privilege—ah, my dear boy!—well, latterly—yes, in America I met—well, they don't *all* talk of dollars and themselves, themselves and dollars. It was a Miss Lyndon; and she did remind me of your dear mother, as I remember her. Miss Lyndon and some relatives are coming on here; you must meet them, if possible. But as for the average—and the peculiar curse about the average, in both sexes, is that it so often thinks itself the exception—if I had had to pass my maturity weighted with the average, her parson, her ignorances, and obstinacies, and her milliners' bills, her dances, her cousins, and her sulkinesses, do you think I should, would, or could have given children's wards to International Hospitals? No—by Gad!'

'It's as well those views of yours are not held by the average man,' observed Mr. Herbert; 'otherwise—your gift to the International Hospital might—not——'

'Eh? humph—humph! Hah!' Mr. Carteret Gibbs took a turn round the room, repeating, 'Hah! humph!'

'No,' he resumed presently, with a smile; 'and everybody doesn't care about whist, and art—art, and the "Physiologie du Goût." You don't, for one, I'm sure.'

Mr. Herbert had returned to the perusal of the last paragraph in the communication from Budge Row.

'Anything urgent in your letter?—not a recall to London, I hope?'

'Oh no,' said Mr. Herbert; 'I can stay on here until we settle the Garth inquiry. They write to me that an English detective, stationed in Paris, has been instructed to take up the investigation. He was to have called upon me this morning. You don't mind—a detective calling at your address?'

'My dear fellow, of course not! Ask him to breakfast. Dev'lish interesting, fellows who are detectives, I should fancy—when you can get 'em to talk.'

'Oh, there are all sorts!'

The first portion of the letter, in the round and squat handwriting of a clerk, with very thick single down-strokes to the 'y's,' and a word or two blurred from the process of the press-copy, ran, in faultlessly regular lines, as follows:

'DEAR SIR,

'Estate of Elliot Burroughes, deceased.

'Herewith please find envelope bearing a Paris post-mark, which has been placed in our hands by Hugh Ormond-Weir, Esq., with a view to facilitating the inquiry. The handwriting is undoubtedly that of Allan Ridgeway Garth, Esq., and you will observe that the date of the post-mark is tolerably recent. In reference to your suggestion for expert aid, we had already communicated with Scotland Yard, and we will keep you informed of the measures decided upon.

'Vaughan ats Evans.

'The defendant has entered an appearance. Mr. Bradall is attending to the matter.

'*In re* Davidson, the younger.

'We cannot find these papers. Did you leave them at home?

'Yours truly,
'GRAY, LONGLEY, AND GRAY.'

The accompanying envelope was of unmistakable French pattern—square, large, with transverse watermarks, and almost transparent. It had been torn open hastily, and, from its soiled appearance, had perhaps been cast aside into a fire-grate, or perhaps had been recovered from a heap of refuse—a dust-bin. As he gazed at the handwriting which he himself at once recognised, Mr. Herbert asked himself under what circumstances this envelope could have passed into the possession of Hugh Ormond-Weir. Yes, the date was tolerably recent; and there was a district post-mark which might be depended upon to materially abridge their labours. But the envelope had been addressed to Evelyn.

'You were saying something about Elliot Burroughes and his eventual change of attitude towards this young Mr. Garth?'

Mr. Herbert replied that Elliot Burroughes had long remained unaware of the relation which had existed between the now missing man and Evelyn Farrar, prior to the latter's marriage. He had even been ignorant of the romantic adventure which had begun their *fiançailles*, and had ended

their friendship. From the day he had been told of Allan Garth's romantic story, with its conclusion, abrupt and merciless, he had completely altered in his demeanour towards his own stepson.

'It was then that he must have made that last will,' wound up Mr. Herbert—'the will referred to in his sealed letter to Gray, Longley, and Gray. I suppose he suddenly softened under the recollection of his own early sorrow. He broke, a good deal, as the end approached. Garth is the universal legatee; and I can tell you one thing—that a smash may be expected for the Ormond-Weir establishment.'

Of the contents of that final paragraph in the letter from the firm, Mr. George Herbert did not deem it necessary to inform his host. The partner who had affixed the signature of the firm had, with his own pen, noted the closing paragraph. And in these lines Mr. Herbert was apprised—first, of the visit to be made at his address in Paris by the detective-officer; secondly, of — correspondence between Evelyn and Allan Garth up to a still more recent date than that which the envelope now in his hands recorded.

She must have known, then, of his precise whereabouts during the past year.

While they were all debating as to the course which would be most effectual for ascertaining with the utmost promptitude, and privately, the fate or the whereabouts of Allan Ridgeway Garth, one word from her might have decided them—might possibly have enlightened them—might have spared them a great deal of trouble—might have saved valuable time. At those interviews of attorney and client, when she, her husband, two of the partners, the sharpest of the departmental managing-clerks, and he, Mr. Herbert, had discussed so carefully all the courses open to them, dismissing one course after the other for reasons personal to Hugh Ormond-Weir, for reasons personal to Evelyn Ormond-Weir, *née* Farrar, and for reasons concerning them jointly—throughout those interviews, then, she had known the word of the enigma, and had steadily withheld it.

Vaguely unnerving—her voice, as she spoke slowly, in subdued tones, resounding like pent-up passion—with full and blazing eyes that drooped and veiled themselves as if they knew and feared what they revealed — an artifice, thought Mr. Herbert sadly—Evelyn herself, in the splendour

of a sensuous efflorescence, the 'white implacable Aphrodite,' her straight eyebrows black, dead black, her heavy coils of hair dead black, black, her mouth infantine, her lips the crimson of the bright crimson azalea—she had listened with, as it seemed, reluctance and disdain; she had heard them anxiously deliberating, and had seen them helplessly perplexed; had objected idly, interposed irrelevant suggestions, and had sat apart, regally assured, coldly incurious—a lie.

And he remembered well how once, when the dusk had fallen, and she spoke, and ceased to speak, the men in that room could not break the silence. They were honest men, too; with one exception they were honest, irreproachable, industrious citizens, devoted to their homes, and earnest for good: and yet their silence had seemed guilty. With one exception they had seemed to cower before this entity, this temperament, grander, more mysterious, in the gloom. Who had dared to break that silence? The idol's idol.

There was one man whom the spell affected not at all; but who, before others, would at times considerately make believe to be enthralled. The fashionable beauty's husband was that man. Her own infatuation for Hugh Ormond-Weir had been wild, headlong, inexplicable. He was the idol of the idol, in fact, and her insensate worship he returned—the servants were gossiping, it would soon reach the boudoir, to somebody's 'man' their butler had talked of it already—with polite serenity, imperturbable indifference. There would be no ground for scenes of tragic jealousy. Ormond-Weir was a man of the world. But Mr. Herbert had once watched her, as she watched that universal favourite—with her own sex—her husband.

'A cool card,' reflected Mr. Herbert; 'he would leave her to-morrow if the smash came! And then, with a temperament like that—by Jove!—whom would she murder?'

Suppose she had known of the altered dispositions of the late Elliot Burroughes, as they would affect Hugh Ormond-Weir? Suppose she had divined it—suppose Borroughes himself had told her of it, malevolently—suppose she had deliberately concealed that knowledge, as she had concealed her knowledge of Garth's whereabouts? Here we had a motive good enough for melodrama; in melodrama, Allan Garth, whose death was 'necessary' to the next heir, her ruined, idolized husband, was a dead man. One thing was undeniable, viz.,

that Garth's disappearance had ensued upon the hurried visit which Evelyn had made to Paris—Evelyn accompanied by Andréa Bertaux.

CHAPTER III.

THE detective officer designated by the Scotland Yard authorities was Mr. Thomas Toppin, appointed by them some time ago as a permanent Paris representative. They appeared to have spoken highly of his capabilities, his discretion, and his zeal. Although comparatively a young member of the force, they said, Mr. Toppin had on more than one occasion earned the favourable notice of the Department for the signal efficiency of his co-operation with officers commissioned specially from Scotland Yard. He had an intimate knowledge of the French metropolis, and was well 'in touch' with his colleagues of the Prefecture.

There had latterly been little in the way of professional duty to engage the zeal and talent of Detective Toppin. Nor could it be alleged that any real chance of rising into world-wide fame had ever yet traversed his horizon. He had 'never yet had to take any case up on his own account here; he had never yet had to see any good case right through, all by himself,' he would occasionally murmur. Someone nearly always came over from the other side, to work with him, as they called it; and, with a single exception, the men they had sent over on their special missions had monopolized the credit for the whole of the work which had been done, after doing hardly anything of the work.

'I wish I could get a good English case here, all to myself,' Detective Toppin was observing, over a *fine*, only a few days prior to his retention for the Garth inquiry, to a similarly discontented young officer in the Sûreté; 'or I wish we could get a good case to do together, you and I, Etienne—a murder—a mystery—something sensational; equally interesting to the English and the French; a good bit of work to do—together, eh? Then they'd see!'

'Aha, *mon vieux!*' had responded his companion, clinking their glasses—'See? They *would* see!'

'But there's no such luck!' Mr. Toppin had resumed with gloom.

'See? I should think they would see! They'd be blind if they didn't see!' Etienne laughed at his own amphibology, and drank '*à la santé de Bibi*,' viz., to his own good health.

'I would as soon work with you, Etienne, as with any man in the Sûreté, no matter what the extent of his experience'—proceeded Mr. Toppin—'barring, of course, one.'

'Oh, of course, excepting M. Renaud,' concurred the other.

'Etienne, you're a man of my own stamp, and I have confidence in *you*. We will do some good work together, Etienne.'

'Well, I will say this, *fichtre!*' answered the other, with the air of one who is determined to do violence to his own modesty. 'There's not a man at our Prefecture, not a single man, whom I should fear comparison with, except, of course, M. Renaud.'

'Oh, always excepting Renaud, of course,' returned Mr. Toppin.

'And you can't include M. Renaud among the regular officers of the Sûreté,' said Etienne. 'He occupies a sort of status apart.'

'Curious character — Renaud,' observed Mr. Toppin meditatively.

'A mystery in himself,' said Etienne.

'What is he engaged upon, just now?' asked Toppin.

'Renaud?—Nothing—nothing just now. That was a good case, the political affair, but only half of it came out. Did you notice?—directly we lighted upon the personality of the marquise in that case—the young wife of the aged general—ah, *diantre!*—we no sooner got up to that element in the case than there it stopped! Money? No. Chivalry! M. Renaud is chivalry itself.'

'So I have heard,' answered Mr. Toppin.

'Chivalrous?—Ha! You have no idea how chivalrous!'

'I think I have,' remarked Mr. Toppin; 'I think I have some idea—how chivalrous.'

'It's not of this epoch,' sneered the other—'*c'est du moyen âge*. A man like that, with those abilities, does great harm. Suppose he had been a judge—not a judge? why not? That's a man of wide attainments, although he conceals

them: goodness knows what he doesn't know; and who can say what his past has been? no one except the minister who got him into the Prefecture; and it's said that his origin was something—oh, high!—high is not the word!—a bar sinister, very possibly—well, but suppose he had been a judge?—not old enough? Bah! And family interest? And——' here the speaker began to pay out imaginary sums of money with his fingers—'aha, *fichtre!* This is a republic, *mon cher!* Well, then, suppose he had been a judge—why it doesn't bear thinking of! I don't believe I ever heard His Excellency, Simplice Renaud, so ineffable and fine-art, pronounce three words; but I know what his maxim is, and it makes me shudder—that no woman could do wrong; that every woman must be shielded; that is to say——'

'That is to say——' interjected Mr. Toppin, with a hoarse laugh, as his companion paused.

'That every pretty woman must be shielded.'

'Ah,' responded Mr. Toppin, all at once abominably cynical, 'that's more like the chivalrous M. Simplice Renaud that I have heard of. We had to confer together one day, and I went to his private residence; and I thought to myself, as I looked round his bachelor's drawing-room, "Wait until you get a case to do with Detective Thomas Toppin, my superfine elegant Chevalier Renaud—and then you'll see—you'll find the said T. T. an obstinate inquirer—you will—you will, indeed." Renaud may be a superior mind; we know that he *is*, don't we? but—stop the case—close it up, just because—? No, no, not exactly; no, I think not, Etienne; not with *me!* Duty—that's what's paramount with me, Etienne—duty!' These words were uttered by Mr. Toppin in a tone of the greatest firmness.

'Duty—that's it!' exclaimed the other—'*Vlan!*' In the energy of his gesture he knocked his tiny liqueur-glass off the *café* table.

'Ah, and there's chivalry of that description on the judicial bench already,' continued Mr. Toppin, wagging his head sagaciously, as they rose to depart. 'And do you know where the remedy is to be looked for? In what we call, in my country, Women's Rights.'

'*Les droits de la femme:* Yes.'

'Because then we might have women judges, and women in authority everywhere, as well as men. And you would

see how hard they'd be on the good-looking lady defendants and prisoners, and how they'd nonsuit the good-looking lady plaintiffs. And the fellows like us, Etienne, the good-looking fellows—because we both have our good looks; you're one style, and I'm another—we could just go and do just whatever we liked. It would be the same business, the other way round. They couldn't send *us* to *travaux forcés* for long terms—ha! ha! ha!'

'There's something to be said for that view of it, certainly,' acquiesced Etienne, softening.

'Should you think he's to be bought?' had demanded Mr. Toppin idly, as he stopped to take leave of Etienne, at the corner of the Pont Neuf.

'M. Renaud?'

'Yes.'

The other pursed up his lips, drew in a long breath, blew it out again, looked up at the heavens as if to see whether they were telling, raised his eyebrows very high indeed, and slowly tossed his head. 'Now you ask me——' said he—'you ask me something that I have often asked myself.'

'The Faubourg Saint-Germain affair—the wrongful detention in a madhouse—the elder brother who was put away on a forged certificate?' suggested Mr. Toppin.

His French colleague brought his scalp down to the middle of his forehead, and then sent it back to the middle of his crown, his ears twitching convulsively with each movement. He did not reply, however.

'That madhouse affair was hushed up by Renaud?' persisted Toppin.

'*Ben——oui!*'

'And there were no feminine influences in that case!'

'Well, you see,' pronounced Etienne, 'he's an aristo. If there's one thing he detests it's the populace; or, rather, it's the orators of the populace that he detests. People in general don't know that about him, but we know it at the Prefecture. And that's one of the things that make us believe he must be of some patrician family—on the morganatic side, no doubt. Besides, look at him! When you see what he does, see how he does it—it's always the unostentatious!'

'And so?'

'And so, I say, that, with his prejudice, it's quite natural

he should be always for keeping scandals in the upper classes away from the Intransigeant journals and the mob. I don't think it's money with him; it's class.'

'It's class with *me*, too,' said Toppin grimly, 'as he'll find out, M. Renaud will, if ever he meets me on a good case in the upper classes. *'Cré nom de noms!* They make us, those cases do, Etienne! Hush-up? Not exactly. Not for Thomas Toppin. T. T. hushes nothing up!' He gave a beggar-woman two *sous*, and looked extremely determined.

'That's right,' returned Etienne; 'and you're a foreigner, and could force his hand.'

'Although,' had continued Toppin, with heartiness, 'if they did send me over a good affair from England, a case that needed to be worked out with a Sûreté man—*you're* the colleague I should ask for, Etienne: and then they'd see!'

The brief instruction to Mr. Toppin from headquarters had arrived a few days upwards. He was to wait upon a Mr. Herbert, such-and-such a number, Rue Beaujon.

Nothing had occurred during his first interview with Mr. Herbert to impress him with the exceptional importance of the inquiry for one Allan Garth, an Englishman, who had gone away from his address some thirteen months ago, and who had carelessly left no clue to his present whereabouts. Was there anything against this Garth, he had, of course, inquired of Mr. Herbert—was he 'wanted'? Oh dear no! It was just a case of legacy: well, the legacy was a considerable one; and two members of the firm of Gray, Longley, and Gray, Budge Row, were the trustees. Here was an envelope in the handwriting of Mr. A. Garth—the latest in point of date which they possessed. Mr. Toppin would observe the date upon the post-mark, and perhaps it might be easy to identify the postal district.

'Oh yes,' answered Mr. Toppin.

The first thing he glanced at was the superscription. Mrs. Ormond-Weir! As he had come round by the Rue de Rivoli on his way up to this address, he had been looking at some new portraits of Mrs. Ormond-Weir in the shop-windows. *'Cré nom!* He did not know exactly what she was; whether a lady amateur who sang at ballad concerts; whether a bold, bad person of blue blood; whether an 'orphan of a colonel in the navy,' who had hooked this poor Ormond-Weir, taken to Ritualism, and got on; or

whether she was one of those too interesting and too numerous ladies who ran away with strange gentlemen, and then excused themselves to public opinion by alleging acts of cruelty against their husbands—charges of peculiarly a Satanic ingenuity—impossible to disprove, conveying an ineradicable stigma, enabling the accuser to reap the sympathies due to injured folk, and straightway enlisting all the ardour of all chivalrous males. And there really was a great deal of chivalry about!

A great deal of chivalry about, there really was! Ha! ha!—Mr. Toppin's 'Ha! ha!' was exclusively mental. He had thought of M. Renaud.

Mrs. Ormond-Weir!—what exactly might she be? Something in some sort of society, it seemed—London society of some sort or another—not *the* Society, of course: at least, he presumed not (Mr. Toppin's mind began to broaden)—something that was somehow to the fore in England; to the fore like that jolly girl he, Toppin, had met with at a *café concert*—with whom he had somewhat rambled round about—who had pretended to be her own maid, but whom he had discovered to be none other than the Mrs. Clay Trevellian, of the Pall Mall Theatre, 'having a little fling in Paris on the quiet'—ah, a jolly girl!—something like that this Mrs. Ormond-Weir must be, from what he understood—something you could put into your own album for a shilling—something that the London cabmen joked upon, and that suggested to the inebriated unskilled labourer a forcible analogy or two, on Saturday night, in scenes of conjugal reproach.

'Mrs. Ormond-Weir!' had exclaimed Detective Toppin, as he turned the envelope over again and studied the superscription.

'Well?'

The tone had prompted him to look up. Mr. Herbert's eyes were fixed upon him with an expression which for the moment disconcerted Mr. Toppin. Half unconsciously, he took to measuring Mr. Herbert's physical proportions.

'A relative?—a relative of our missing man?'

'What then?'

'Oh, nothing.'

Nothing? Ha!—the man before him was no relative of hers, at any rate. That he'd swear.

'Except that in cases of mysterious disappearance,' ventured Mr. Toppin, who had suddenly jumped to the conclusion that he had underrated the importance of this business—'it's just as well to hold all the possible clues, especially when there's a woman mixed up with——'

'I say—Mr. Detective Toppin—will you——'

'Why, this fellow's going to hit me,' thought Mr. Toppin. 'He'll have to be pretty sharp with his left, then!—hits with his right—oh, if that's all he knows about it, goodness gracious me, oh dear! How I *should* cut him up! It would be a pity: a nice young gentleman, he seems—quite the gentleman. I'll just stop him, if he leads—I won't counter him!'

'Look here, Mr. Toppin'—the speaker was quite pale, as well as quite the gentleman—'you will have the extreme kindness to attend to my instructions: to wait for my instructions, to limit your action by my instructions, to do nothing whatever without my instructions; and to report to me, always, precisely what you may have done: otherwise, you know, Mr. Detective Toppin, we dispense with your valuable services on the spot, and we wire to London for another man.'

'That's all right,' protested Toppin, in a bluff and hearty way, but vexed. This was going to be a good case, and he was to have his hands tied! 'That's all right, sir, of course.'

'Above all, the inquiry must be confidential.'

'Very well, sir.'

'And if the case should—*should*——' (Mr. Herbert looked away, and his face changed: there were contingencies which overwhelmed him)—'if we *should* find the case escaping from our own control—why—at all costs the name on that envelope must be kept out of it.'

'We'll do our best,' answered Toppin, a little downcast.

'It *must* be so!'

'Well, I'll do my best, sir.'

'Money's no object in this case, and—if it came to a push—I should look to you to negotiate, and you would be handsomely remunerated.'

'Oh, but excuse me, sir—if I want anything, it's not money, it's reputation!'

'Advancement in your profession: well, we'll see to that for you.'

Mr. Toppin did not altogether mean promotion in the force; he meant notoriety: his portrait in the illustrated papers; his opinions and disclosures asked for by stenographic interviewers; the Transatlantic journal and its catch-lines—'A Drama of Two Cities—Effete Europe—London's Latest Lunacy—The High-toned Belle of the Too-too Ball-room and her Highly-strung Beau—She Resembles the Portraits of L. Borgia—Detective Toppin—Unknown Yesterday, but now the Hero of the Thrilling Drama—Not a Dunder-headed Britisher this time—Step Across and See Us, Mr. Toppin—[By cable to the *Hurricane*]'—something of that kind; and perhaps his photograph for a shilling, coloured and cabinet-sizes more expensive—like those of the professional beauty of two years ago whose counterfeit presentment he had by him on an old box of patent sticking-plaster. Well, why not! In his own case there would have been some useful work done—'Something accomplished, something done,' as Inspector Byde had quoted to him from some fellow or other: Longfellow, he believed. Well, he didn't care who, but it was grand, it was inspiriting, and that fellow, whoever he was—an American, Byde had said—must have been a fine, fine fellow: he would have liked to have had a talk with him, and to have asked him questions—there would have been some useful work done at perhaps the risk of his own life; whereas that professional beauty, whom they had heard of no more, had but displayed herself as she was born.

'We'll set you up in a Private Inquiry Office on your own account,' resumed Mr. Herbert.

'Phew!—I'm with you,' said Toppin.

'Very well, then,' answered Mr. Herbert. 'Do your best.'

But what might there be in this inquiry, then? A love-affair, he hoped—with poisoning. Ever since he joined the force he had been hankering after a good love-affair, with poisoning.

'How about a case of guilt?' demanded Toppin darkly.

'Guilt?'

'The lady—guilt—suppose her name turns up in connection with mysterious disappearance—secret visits—married lady, Mrs. Ormond-Weir—interested in disappearance of our man——'

'What on earth are you running your head against!' exclaimed Mr. Herbert, turning abruptly towards the wine-decanter and filling two glasses.

'Hand shakes,' was Mr. Toppin's mental comment; 'knows something he won't tell me. There's the French police, you see,' he continued—'suppose they made a mistake, and held on? And if there's guilt in this case, if there's a *primâ-facie*—I mean, if the lady'—he stopped and rubbed his chin dubiously—I don't think you had better count upon *me*, sir.'

'Nonsense!—Guilt?—Rubbish—utter nonsense! Good God, man! don't talk or think such utter drivelling rubbish and nonsense as that!'

Guilt? No, no! Not any kind of guilt!

He had convinced himself that all he dreaded was the construction which the world might place upon a compromising visit; and now, here was this policeman in plain clothes bluntly going farther than it had ever occurred to him that the world could go—farther than his unacknowledged fears. Fortunately, she had journeyed hither with the friend and companion who, until the marriage, had resided with the Farrar family as her governess. For the fact stood at present beyond all doubt that it was Evelyn herself who had paid a visit to the Rue de Monceau—Evelyn, accompanied by Madame Bertaux.

But—at this moment—now—great heavens!—what if she had hurriedly revisited Paris on a similarly shameful errand!

What if, acquainted with Garth's whereabouts, she had shamefully determined upon another such appeal to him? Garth had saved them once from pecuniary disaster: suppose she were appealing to him once more for rescue at this critical moment in her husband's fortunes? The firm had never guessed at the expedient by which their client, Hugh Ormond-Weir, had been able to stave off ruin a year ago. They had accounted for it by sudden successes at the gaming-table. But the whole affair had been rendered quite clear now. Hugh Ormond-Weir had found himself constrained to offer a partial explanation to Gray, Longley, and Gray; and the tenor of his statement had been communicated to Mr. Herbert in his private paragraph at the close of their letter. Besides, there was the single interview which

Evelyn, accompanied by Madame Bertaux, had sought with Garth in Paris; the dates tallied: It was clear. Had she returned here, secretly—secretly so far as all persons but her husband were concerned? Was it for the reason that he reckoned upon this resource, that her husband—why, that man must be——!—bah, useless to waste epithets upon him!—that Ormond-Weir had strenuously opposed the employment of the ordinary public channels in the search for Allan Garth?

And Evelyn herself—her conscience, her self-respect? No; a mad infatuation such as hers was capable of any impulse—an ignoble impulse, even—any act of cruelty to a third—of cruelty, or of madness.

'Then I'll just go round to the Rue de Monceau,' observed Mr. Toppin; 'to begin at the beginning will be just as well.'

'You need not go there,' said Mr. Herbert curtly; 'I am already posted as to that quarter. You have the district post-office to work upon, and that envelope. Will it be a difficult undertaking?'

'Difficult! You leave it to me, sir. I'll find our man in forty-eight hours, if he's alive.'

Mr. Toppin had hereupon departed, and, of course—after ascertaining that he was not being watched—had wended his way straight to the Rue de Monceau.

The details gleaned at that address by the future 'Hero of the Thrilling Drama' had indeed fired his imagination. 'Step across and see us, Mr. Toppin!' No you don't, responded Mr. Toppin to that cordial invitation, which he ought to have been more grateful for, but which, as a matter of fact, had not yet been extended—not for T. T. 'Why, there are some of them, out there, who'd go and say they'd been and taught me all my business—me!—that put old Colonel Sampson up to organizing that service—me!—a thirteen-stone man, fit, five foot eleven and a half in my stockings, and as light on my toes as a feather-weight professional—me—not for Thomas Top!' He winked at the United States. In the absence of the slightest manifestation of concern from any portion of America, he went on to soliloquize: 'Should like to go and see the old Colonel, too! Jolly old boy when he was over here—old Colonel Sampson, Wigwam City, Penn. Lord-a-mussy, what a time we did have of it, to be sure! "Toppin," he says, as he was going

away by the train, "if ever you want a friend," he says, "Wigwam City, Penn.,—you know—un'rstan'?—the old Colonel!" "Colonel," I says, "you've left one aching heart behind," I says, "and that's the heart of T. T." "Toppin," he says, "I'll send you out some barrels of my oysters, and some of my own whisky—you know!" "Colonel," I says, "you've often made my head ache," I says, "and I shall ever think of you with brotherly love." "Ah, my son," he says, "there's not many Englishmen that I can do with; but you're a man I'd like to see in Wigwam City." "Colonel," I says, "there's a many Americans that it makes me sick to listen to, but you're a man I'd like to see a British subject." "That's what I approve of," says he, "every man to stand by and to uphold his country." "Your hand, Colonel," says I, "a bond of union between the two nations." "I respect you, Toppin," he says; "don't ever forget the old Colonel, Wigwam City, Penn.; don't you cross the ocean without calling." "You'll forget me, Colonel," I says to him, on that. "Never, my son," he says, "never, after the good time that we've had, 'round together. And don't you cross the ocean without looking in at Wigwam City;" ah, and I *was* sorry to part with that old Colonel!' Step across? If this case turned out as it had begun—'*Cré nom!* At any rate, he'd have his own Inquiry Office; and then he'd have a Transatlantic branch of his Paris Agency; and, to establish that, he'd make a trip, and he'd take the Colonel some real old burgundy. Though such a jolly old patriotic son of an old rusty firelock was the Colonel, that very likely he'd prefer the Californian claret—at least, he'd say so.

Within the twenty-four hours, instead of twice that number, Mr. Toppin was again presenting himself at the Rue Beaujon.

Mr. Herbert received him with an anxiety that was ill-concealed. 'You have come through pretty well, I can see,' said Mr. Herbert to his visitor.

'I have found our man,' replied Detective Toppin.

'You have seen him?'

'No; I thought I would report as soon as I had traced him.'

'That's right. Come inside. There's no one there but my host and old friend, Mr. Carteret Gibbs. You can speak freely in his presence.' Mr. Herbert led the way into the

library. 'This is the gentleman of whom I have spoken to you—Mr. Detective Toppin,' said he to Mr. Gibbs, who put down a bronze he had been examining at the window.

'How do you do, Mr. Toppin—we are fellow-residents, it seems?' He brought forward the most easy of his reading-chairs, and gazed at Mr. Toppin with the liveliest interest.

'I am stationed here for Scotland Yard, sir,' returned his visitor mechanically. As an officer in plain clothes he was accustomed to that kind of affectionate scrutiny from idle folk who floated on the calm surface of society, a treacherous, a fathomless deep.

'In two words, what have you ascertained?' asked Mr. Herbert nervously.

'Do you take sherry?' interposed their host.

'Thank you, sir—I do—and——'

'Yes?'

'With your permission, sir—I'll take it brown.'

'Certainly: robust—robust——' Their host produced decanters. 'How do you find it?'

'Thank you, sir—as good as ever I tasted.' He sniffed at the contents of his glass before putting it down, and then inhaled the fragrance of some lusty wall-flowers, bundled together in a tinted vase. 'Don't ever wish for anything in the sherry line better than that, sir.' 'This is the spear that I was meant for,' was Mr. Toppin's reflection as he accidentally kicked over a tiny table and caught it with his large hand: 'Why was I born a policeman?'

'Well, then, Mr. Toppin——' began Mr. Herbert again.

'In accordance with the instructions lodged with me in the course of yesterday, I proceeded to make private inquiries as to the whereabouts of Allan Ridgeway Garth, Esq.' Mr. Toppin paused for a moment, well satisfied with his recital. 'I found that on his moving from the Rue de Monceau, the said A. R. Garth had left with the district postal authorities a direction for all future letters to be forwarded to him, care of a small stationer in another neighbourhood. On inquiry at the stationer's, I found that during a certain space of time the said A. R. Garth had duly called for letters; that hardly any letters had arrived for him; and that after a time the said A. R. Garth had ceased to call. Letters addressed to that party had been received within the last six weeks, about; and as they had

not been applied for, they were shown to me. These letters each bore the office-stamp of Gray, Longley, and Gray, solicitors, London.'

'Just so: our unanswered communications'—thought Mr. Herbert.

'In the district indicated by the post-mark on this envelope, I made inquiries, at the official sources open to me, for an Englishman answering the description, who had taken up his residence there some months ago, in apparently indigent circumstances.'

'What!'

'Apparently indigent circumstances; being guided in that description of him by the facts elicited from the stationer just referred to. I at once discovered that an Englishman exactly answering the description—tall, slight stoop in the shoulders, sallow complexion, jet-black hair, unprepossessing appearance——'

'I never said "unprepossessing appearance"——'

'No, the stationer said "unprepossessing appearance"—had come into the neighbourhood as a teacher of the English language.'

'Oh, that can't be our man!' exclaimed Mr. Herbert.

'In order to test a notion of my own,' continued Detective Toppin, 'I requested to be permitted to make a guess at the stranger's name. Amateurs who are desirous of concealing their identity will usually assume, I have noticed in the exercise of my profession, some name similar to their own. Now, Garth not being a name that's easy, as you may say, to couple like—I said to my informants in official spears, "Just you let me have two guesses;" and they did; and I guessed it the first time.'

'Well?'

'M. Allen; very poor; lessons in the English language; living in a place where the rents are almost nothing at all.'

'I'd like to know where that is,' interrupted Mr. Carteret Gibbs—'in Paris—ha! ha!'

'The Rue Caïn,' said Detective Toppin.

'The—— ?'

It was Mr. Herbert who asked.

'—— Rue Caïn,' said Detective Toppin.

'*En effet!*' murmured their host. 'I had not thought of that.'

'The Rue Caïn?'

Mr. Herbert could not believe that he had heard the designation aright.

'Ah, you don't know about it, sir,' answered Mr. Toppin. 'I'll tell you about it as we go down, if you like.'

'The Rue Caïn!' repeated Mr. Carteret Gibbs. 'Poor devil! Gambling? The Bourse? He *must* have come to grief, and no mistake!—unless he has gone clean out of his mind.'

Mr. Herbert glanced from one to the other.

'Let us lose no time,' said he abruptly.

'There's no time like the present,' concurred Mr. Toppin.

'Is it far from here—how far?'

'Never was in the locality myself,' observed Mr. Gibbs—'but we've heard enough about it, goodness knows!'

'Runs into the Boulevard Richard-Lenoir, the street does,' answered Mr. Toppin, looking at his watch. 'It's not quite 10.15 now; we can be there before eleven.'

'Come, then!'

They made hasty preparations for departure.

'George, I say,' called Mr. Carteret Gibbs—'you dine with me at the club, you know!'

'At your club—all right! But if anything should happen to keep me away——'

'Happen? Nonsense, man—nothing can happen!'

'Well—there are contingencies'—Mr. Herbert hardly dared trust himself to speak—'I really cannot say what there may be for me to do, you know!'

'Oh, hang it, don't spoil our party!'

As they drove away together in their cab, Mr. Herbert reiterated his earnest injunction with respect to the name and fame of Mrs. Ormond-Weir; and again he perceived that the anxiety which constrained him to speak was driving him into incautious over-emphasis.

'That'll be all right, sir,' answered Toppin; 'I don't suppose there's anything wrong, but if there *should* be something—if we *should* hear something about mysterious visits from a beautiful foreign lady of the best world'—the Machiavellian T. T. paused to allow his oblique volley to go home—'and if they *should* want to bring it all up, here, out of spite against the English, who are always horrified and scandalized at what the French do—I think I can arrange it for you: short of the point I mentioned, of course.'

'Oh, that of course; but *that* need not be entertained. It's absurd.'

'Short of a case of guilt,' persisted Mr. Toppin. 'I can see to it for you, sir.'

'My good fellow, you are banging your head against a brick wall. Criminality? You mustn't let your mind rest for a single moment on any such notion as criminality in connection with—in connection with—the name inscribed upon the envelope I handed you. Ladies of birth, education and refinement don't go about the world perpetrating crimes! Good God! You're thinking of the novel, and the play in *tableaux!*'

'You'll excuse me, sir,' protested Toppin, 'but now you are on *my* ground, sir. I'm not a veteran in the force—but ah, couldn't I just! if I liked, I could tell you something! Ah!'

With every show of great good-humour, Mr. Herbert then rallied his companion upon what he termed his professional credulity. Why—as a lawyer, did not he himself know something of the matter, too! Yes—as a family lawyer, he did know something of those matters, too.

In his heart of hearts, he prayed that heaven would spare her.

Mr. Toppin wondered at the simplicity of this young gentleman by his side. How strange—for a lawyer! Very different from—from—let us see—the Renaud type of man, for instance. He had not thought of it whilst talking over Renaud's character with Etienne, recently; but M. Renaud had made the remark to him, Toppin, that, although no woman ever could do wrong, he, Simplice Jean Louis Renaud, invariably began those of his cases with which married ladies were mixed up, by assuming the married lady's culpability. He did this for the sake of the keen pleasure subsequently afforded to him by the invariable discovery of the lady's complete innocence. The 'Bayard of the Prefecture,' somebody had nicknamed the great Simplice Renaud.

Mr. Herbert prayed in his heart of hearts that heaven would avert all danger from her. Let her not be tempted—let her not be tried too cruelly! For the sake of one man whom she loved—in the mere sordid interest of that one man—she might be tempted by ostensible security—she

might be weak, she might be fatal. The sophistries of her own infatuation were the weapons he now feared. A crowning wrong inflicted on the lunatic Allan Garth—one wrong more or less—how could it weigh with her? Would she not be capable of self-sacrifice for her own idol—of an act of mingled self-sacrifice and perfidy? Alas, alas!—assuredly! And she was capable, then, of a devotion such as this, at last? Sublime perfidy! egotistical self-sacrifice! Watch over her—guard her, merciful Heaven, he prayed, protect her from the avenging daughter of night—Nemesis!

CHAPTER IV.

'The Rue Caïn? Evil? Ah, you may well say so, sir,' continued Mr. Toppin. They were driving along the Boulevard Richard-Lenoir. 'We had better stop before we get into the street. There are not many cabs that go along it now, and it's no use attracting attention.'

They alighted from the vehicle, and Mr. Toppin purchased a floral ornament for his coat. The dark-eyed sallow flower-girl, with whom he jested in a rakish and superfluous manner, listened with the smile she kept for gentlemen '*jeunes et beaux*.'

'Flowers fresh up this morning from the country?' asked Mr. Toppin engagingly, as he declined a huge bouquet, on the plea of physical weakness; 'or from our own conservatory?'

'From our own conservatory!' answered the maid, with some contempt.

'The Garden of Eden?' said Toppin, holding near her lips for a moment the coarse, red flower which he had purchased.

'The Rue Caïn,' answered the maid.

'They are redder than this red, red—red geranium,' declared Mr. Toppin, in English, to the haughty young gentleman, his companion. He repeated his opinion in a French phrase.

'I know that,' said the flower-girl, again smiling.

A sabre-cut—an open, glistening wound left in naked flesh by the swift passage of a dagger.

'*Tenez*,' added the girl, dashing a few drops of bright

spray over the harsh red, red geranium; 'now you will have blood upon you!'

'Ah, ha! *bien trouvé*,' approved Mr. Toppin; 'for I am just going into the right locality—the Rue Caïn.'

'Don't give yourself the trouble to call on me, then,' said the girl; 'for I'm not at home.'

'I'll bribe your *valet de chambre* with five louis,' said the facetious Toppin. 'I'll bribe him to tell me the exact truth.'

'As much as you like,' answered the girl, flashing another of her unmirthful smiles. 'Make it ten—he gives me half; and if you see *maman* presently in the carriage, taking home some *friture*, tell her that the fine gentlemen this morning haven't had *sous* enough to buy my bouquet.'

'That's more like it,' observed Mr. Toppin, with considerable gusto, as he rejoined his companion. 'Now that's what I call a bit of Paris. Oh, I remember the first French flower-girl I ever did see, sir. I was over on the Surrey side of the water, and she had a short white muslin frock on, and she wore pink ribbons, and a lace cap, and padded stockings, and she came on the stage singing, always singing—La, la, la! E, ē, ē, ē!'

'Tra, la, la!' Mr. Toppin tried a falsetto imitation, and it broke. 'I was a little boy then, sir; but somehow all that didn't seem to be natural. "Who'll buy my pretty flowers? Who'll buy my pretty, pretty flowers?" That was how she went about calling, sir; and she'd keep on curtseying, although there might be no one on the stage, "Kind gentlemen, won't you buy sweet lavender?" And then she cried, because no one would buy—well, you're not obliged to buy, are you?—and as she was sitting on a doorstep in a thunderstorm, a villain came in, and liked her. I was only a little boy, sir, but it didn't seem natural. She turned out to be a nobleman's daughter. My uncle was a greengrocer, that got orders for exhibiting the playbills; and my aunt was a-crying in the next seat to me; but *I* couldn't cry, sir; I felt ashamed, sir, though *I* had nothing to do with it! Ah, I knew it couldn't be natural!' Mr. Toppin began to hum:

'Joli mois de mai,
Quand reviendras-tu,
. . . . . .

And here we are, sir,' he suddenly announced—'in the

month of May, when the spring-time has come, Sister Mary —and in the Rue Caïn.'

'This!'

Mr. Herbert gazed along a wide, silent, sombre street, enveloped in a haze. 'Rue de Caen' he read in half-effaced characters on the empty building at the corner.

'Yes; and it's time the Municipal Council changed the name. They'd promised to change it when the *sobriquet* got into the newspapers; petition after petition went up to them from the inhabitants. But see what party feeling is—and spite! This arrondissement voted the wrong way in the last municipal election. The majority had done nothing for them; and so, in this long street, and in a good many of the streets round about, they went and voted for a minority man, and sent him in right ahead. That showed the other arrondissements that, if you liked to try, you could upset the majority, and the example was followed in two other places. When they saw their numbers reduced, and their influence lessened, the majority at the Council got very vicious, sir, and out of spite they won't include this thoroughfare in their alterations of street-names. Property came down with a run, too, I can tell you, sir! I wonder'—Mr. Toppin glanced at the tall, bare, dreary structures on either side—'I wonder what the letting value can be now: I mean, how little!'

The air was moist and warm and dense. A coating of mud had been left along the pavement and on the rough road by heavy showers of rain earlier in the day. The bank of dull cloud overhead had almost the same hue as the high, gray houses. Impenetrable seemed the low-lying, level mass of gray cloud overhead. The eye sought in vain a fissure in that stern, depressing masonry above. The blue of heaven shut out eternally, it seemed: eternally banished the revivifying sharp clear air—the breeze.

To the right and left, fissures in the dank and crumbling walls that rose to such a frowning altitude. Overhead, a gray mass, resting ponderously upon the stained parapets, so high, on either side.

Of the sepulchre, this clinging, humid atmosphere—a shroud intangible. Entombed, all they who dwelt here: not dead: grasping at life and dragging on existences: but spiritless, walled in, without hope, except——

'There stands the historical house,' said Detective Toppin.

He pointed to a building across the way. Its bright new raiment of dun plaster had rendered it already conspicuous at some distance.

The ground-floor premises were painted in garish stripes of green and orange, bright brown and scarlet. The gaudy shutters had not yet been taken down.

'Why, they've let the shop to an oil-and-colour man,' remarked Mr. Toppin; 'sells explosives, and pays hardly any rent, I suppose. But see how nice and clean the place looks! They've had it done up for the French tourists.'

Mr. Herbert stopped with his companion, and mechanically surveyed the premises. His glance rested upon a row of windows of which the shutters were all closed.

'French country people up in Paris on excursions come here to look at this house,' continued Mr. Toppin; 'and they pay money to walk through some of the rooms. The landlord lets the upper premises advantageously. But he can't let that first-floor, where the shutters are closed. Some of the people said it was haunted, and the others laughed at them. But no one could live in those rooms. They've had religious people there, and—what do you call it?—atheists; and none of them could stay; and for a good reason. I read in the paper the other day that it was Impotism Moral.' Mr. Toppin groped in his waistcoat-pocket for a newspaper cutting, which, when produced, he exhibited to Mr. Herbert, indicating specially the phrase *hypnotisme moral*. 'No, sir; too many tragedies have happened there; too many cases have been thought out in those rooms. It's the temperament of the Gaul, sir—that paper says. Example is worse than precept, as we used to learn at school.'

'The crime you told me of as we came along—did that occur here?' asked Mr. Herbert, glancing again at the row of closed windows.

'That story with Cain in it—the first of them, that is?—yes, sir,' answered Mr. Toppin, with a showman's pride—'the house is now before you, the historical house!'

No one had hitherto met or overtaken them as they advanced. Here and there they had passed a jaded ex-artisan, too feeble to cry 'Down with capital!' too poor to

replenish the broken pipe he still held between his teeth—satisfied with inaction; a rugged beldame who was gazing at a frowsy cat; a hollow-eyed youth who stared vacantly at the far traffic along the thoroughfare that terminated the street; a policeman who was reading. Here and there—'To let—to let.'

'It does not look at all like a desperate neighbourhood,' said Mr. Herbert, opening his shoulders to breathe more freely. 'But this group who have just come up are frightful types of villainy.'

'It isn't what you would call a desperate quarter, sir,' returned his companion—'it's more like what you would call a quarter that has had no luck; it has been an unfortunate quarter, that's what it has been. Now look at that row of windows where the shutters are closed, take that case again—we'll get on, sir; these men are talking about us—the first two crimes wouldn't have mattered so much, although they were what I told you; but when it came to the third——! You couldn't get the respectable folk to stay in the Rue de Caen. Because it used to be quite the respectable quarter, sir—middle-class tradesmen, and so on—lower middle-class, perhaps. But was it likely they would stay, when everybody began to call the street the Rue Caïn, and up and down the boulevards, the newspaper-hawkers were shouting out things about the Rue de Caen? Only a low class of people would come and live here after a time, because, in spite of the police, things went from bad to worse. And down came the rents pretty quick! It's fearful, the luck of this street! *I* don't know'—concluded Mr. Toppin—'but if there's such a thing as haunted, this street is. And the house we've just left was the cause of it all. That house began it, with the Cain and Cain affair—for you couldn't call it Cain and Abel!'

As they moved slowly onwards through the still, oppressive atmosphere, their footmarks left imprinted with distinctness in the dark mud, the slight acclivity in the winding street seemed a steep ascent, fatiguing, endless.

'We shall get into the busy portion of the street presently,' observed Mr. Toppin. 'You see that house to let, sir, over the road, the second from the rag-shop? That's where a Spaniard murdered his stepdaughter and committed suicide. The stepdaughter was only in her four-

teenth year. Made a little sensation, that case did—not so very much, though. Hark! There go the fire-engines—one of the next streets; not this street—no such chance! No fires ever break out in the Rue Caïn. Good thing if the whole place was burnt down! They could rebuild it then. As it stands, it won't be of the slightest use renaming it. Communards live in this street now. Communards and German outlaws and Nihilists—the sincere men, I mean, you know, sir—the men who are sent on the dynamite-bomb errands, and risk something; not the drawing-room conspirators, who get the money and show off. Thieves live here—the lowest class—men and women thieves. I dare say there are a few drawing-masters, too, and professors of music—at the prices dressmakers can pay.'

A young woman in a tattered robe, her face whitened with a zinc-wash, her hair dyed the colour of new gold, stood at an open first-floor window cleaning a pair of boots. She called the attention of some one within the apartment to the figure of Mr. George Herbert, as he unconsciously exhibited the superior sartorial elegances of an ancient house near Hanover Square. A ruffianly face loomed out of the obscurity, and peered after the two strangers as they went by. One of the two strangers might have been a stalwart native; but the other was perhaps an English *milord*.

Detective Toppin nodded to a policeman who was lounging at the entrance to a dingy wine-shop.

'*Bonjour*,' said he; 'no new cases for a long time—how long—a month?'

'There's something to-day, I believe,' returned the policeman listlessly; 'up the street somewhere, near the other end.'

'What kind of case?'

'I don't know,' was the reply.

'Does the patron know?' asked Mr. Toppin.

'Have you heard, *patron?*' called the policeman to the landlord, who was leaning unoccupied against the leaden counter. He repeated the question.

'No, I have not heard,' answered the landlord. 'But here is Monsieur Jules, who came down half an hour ago. Did you hear that there was anything fresh, Monsieur Jules?'

The man addressed was a little, unshaven, dyspeptic

shoemaker, just then draining his glass of its claret-coloured lees.

'Do you think I take any notice?' he replied cynically. 'The Rue de Caen? Why, that's always *la suite au prochain numéro!*' He gathered up the loose folds of the coarse bag which contained his boots and shoes. 'Take notice of the histories in the Rue Caïn! *Oh, la, la!*'

'I may have been mistaken,' said the policeman to Detective Toppin.

They resumed their journey towards the 'busy portion of the street.' Here, certainly, untenanted shops became less numerous. Those which exhibited commodities for sale, however, seemed to all deal in the very same things. The stocks of aged figs, mildewed raisins, musty biscuits, prunes that never could be stewed, always seemed the same. The skeins of *nouilles*, the bush of vermicelli, always had a petrified or wooden aspect—an aspect of half-prepared jute, fossilized. Cracked and shrunken fragments of strange cheese; bacon that had desiccated into hide; speckled eggs, decomposing in foul nests of straw; warped and bowed and dusty liquorice, in long glass jars that served as ornaments; dried beans, red or white, or split-peas in little sacks; blocks of common Marseilles yellow soap; tinned lobster, candles, honey that looked like glue; greenish-brown coffee-berries, husks of an aroma long departed; tablets of chocolate, firewood, wrinkled apples, twine—the same articles, it seemed, unchangeably the same—never purchased, never renewed. Some pet animal, torpid, would occasionally adorn the shop window; or relief to the eye would be afforded by the pictorial image of a florid banqueter, quaffing white wine or in ecstasy at a truffle, his jocund relish dating years back. The one contrast to all things else—a contrast of newness and bright colour—that one fresh nook in each of the grimy shop-fronts was the corner where the yellow-sealed and red-sealed beautifully spotless bottles of cheap red wine reposed on bunches of cheap red tissue-paper, cut in fine strips.

Arriving at one of these establishments, near the abrupt bend in the deserted thoroughfare, they surprised a creature dozing just inside the doorway. It was an unchained monkey, and it sprang up to the counter, blinked and frowned, and chattered feebly at them as they went by.

'Under a cloud—the Rue de Caen,' said Mr. Herbert, with an attempt at cheerfulness.

He looked up, turned, looked back, and sighed.

The heavy, low-lying, dull cloud overhead rested upon the wet, insecure edges of lofty parapet, on either side, like a tombstone posed upon the crumbled margins of a grave.

'We cannot be far from the site of the old Bastille,' he added.

'The Place lies in that direction,' answered his guide, pointing; 'not many minutes from here.'

'The shadow of the Bastille!' murmured Mr. Herbert, glancing once more down the bare, gray, opposite walls of grim, half-tenanted, towering, silent houses.

From the slight eminence on which they stood, the lower portion of the Rue Caïn—the ground they had traversed—appeared yet more densely bathed in mist. Tepid and motionless, the atmosphere still dogged the steps of him who sought to escape from it. The spirit yearned for the invigorating breeze, unknown, perhaps, here.

No ripple ever stirred, perhaps, that brumous pall, that overwhelming, permeating blight; no sudden, keen, and angry blast would ever sweep that brooding vapour from its home, perhaps; no talisman—not love, for there are crimes of jealousy; not humbleness, for there are suicides by the despairing; not pride, for around her, fatally, pride sows rancour; not faith in pledges by religion, for there is the vanity of martyrdom, the aspiration for apotheosis—no talisman might ever stay, perhaps, the shadowy hand in this air, stabbing at life.

In this air, to breathe freely seemed preternatural. Air? —was it indeed air? The lungs dilated—dilated—in vain! It was a curse that stole into the lungs—a fluid bane that killed good thoughts, as nitrogen extinguishes the taper-flame. A gray, tainted influence went into the lungs, and swathed the mind in a new suggestion. Wrongs unatoned for, suffered long since at the hands of fellow-men, and long since forgotten, rose up all at once to claim redress. But it was not redress they coveted; vengeance they coveted, not redress; and they whispered vengeance—and the vengeance was blood-red.

To dwell amid the shades of death, imprisoned in the Rue Caïn! To seek out this valley of miasma; to bring hither,

to heal, a broken heart—a shaken brain, perhaps! Madness! And could it be that Garth had ever dwelt here—still dwelt here—alone to combat evil, dragged down by a murderous endemic? His sallow countenance cadaverous, his prominent brown eyes glittering, perhaps, in frenzy—the tall, gaunt figure of Allan Garth would stalk through this clouded vale of fever like a spectral outline which a ghostly world reveals for but a moment, grasping at it jealously again.

If Evelyn came to this spot, led by Nemesis, too cruel, too cruel!—if Evelyn, unrepentant, came here, a selfish woman of superb loveliness: no longer the imperious, unthinking girl, idolized by this man, but an assured trifler—whom he might with difficulty recognise—in appearance, only, the assured trifler—if, with the steady purpose of her own love, she should rouse the memories of the bitter day which made this man the mere spectator of another's happiness—why, what was the peril—*which* was the peril?—if Evelyn, wedded to that other, forced upon this man the picture of her happiness, ardent in her own purpose—O God!—a maniac's rage. . . .

'The assassin has not yet been discovered—and never will be, I should think,' concluded Mr. Toppin, who had been engaged in the narration of 'a case' to which his companion paid no heed. 'Strange business, wasn't it, sir?'

'Very strange,' said Mr. Herbert mechanically.

'That was the house, over there—the one where the bricks are showing through the plaster. The water-pipe wants propping up. It's dangerous, like that. Might fall down any day. Wouldn't improve you, if it dropped down on the top of your hat. The whole house unlet. Landlord must be one of the obstinate sort; won't bring the rent down a *centime;* hopes for a turn; prefers to see the place empty rather than reduce the figure; lots of that sort here. Stick to it and lose your money, but don't give way. "And so say all of *us!*" Hooray! Do you know what I should do, sir, if that was my property?'

'No!'

'I'd insure it and burn it down.'

'Yes?'

'It's not the least bit of use in the world, changing the name. You see that house where the windows are broken——'

'Oh—no more!' protested Mr. Herbert; 'no more!'

'No, sir.'

They had now turned the abrupt bend in the street. This, the higher portion of the Rue de Caen, had evidently been constructed at an earlier period. Instead of facing each other in two level, uniform rows, the edifices here, in irregular lines, straggling patches, might have been thrown together haphazard. Some of them, half the height of their immediate neighbours, and red-roofed, appeared to be collapsing, crushed, no longer able to bear up under life. On one such rickety structure, a huge red key, and a red hand, pointing downwards, indicated to the passer-by the premises of the working locksmith. Across the road, a chemist stood at the entrance of a sinister den, his own, chatting with the butcher from next door. The spherical red jars in the chemist's window glared through the dulled panes of glass like two insatiate and malignant eyes, to light up with their signal or their menace when the dusk fell.

Amid the mire and melancholy of the Rue Caïn, a dismal furniture-van, stationed opposite an archway the colour of tarpaulin, looked as if it were an everlasting fixture—an excrescence, mouldered. There was a shaggy animal, however, in the shafts—a faded roan patriarch of some race or another, a quadruped whose shapeless coat was all clotted with uncleanliness and knotted with dry mud, a hippodame from epoch *n*, an imitation modern-horse from beneath whose problematical joints straw might have protruded without astonishing anyone but his proprietor. A man dressed in shabby black was moving out his own furniture. The carman was patching up the near-side wheels. One jolt, and everything would surely fall to pieces; the van, the furniture, the carman, and the horse!

To reach the premises of a stationer, where Mr. Toppin meant to make the inquiry which was force of habit with him, they had to pass the butcher's blood-stained board, the row of gleaming steel hooks, the greasy knives.

Crouching at the gutter a knot of children were about to play at butchers, too, with a gigantic dead rat, in a bed of slush. One of the emaciated little boys uttered a familiar monosyllable of joy, as he happened to glance upwards. A crow which had lost its way in the metropolis was hovering overhead wearily. It seemed to have found its resting-place at last, and sluggishly it sank down, out of sight, two flaps

of heavy wings resounding from the rear of a dilapidated gable.

'You can see those birds on the ground, in the country,' said the little boy. 'When my father takes me to the fortifications, I can see them walking about in the fields.'

The odour of the butcher's shop pursued them to the threshold of the small stationer's. Mr. Herbert shuddered at the odour, and the hues. Mr. Toppin pretended to be struck with the merits of a coloured caricature, hung up, with last year's comic songs, at the battered doorway. On the other side of the counter sat a middle-aged woman, knitting, her shoulders huddled in a sable shawl.

'*M'sieur ?*' She raised her eyes, void of expression.

Mr. Toppin completed his purchase, and remarked sympathetically upon the neglected condition of the Rue de Caïn —disagreeable to the foot-passenger, odious to the eye, and a discredit to any capital with large and liberal institutions, said he.

'*Oh, la ! la ! Robert, Robert !*'

The response was not encouraging. It issued, however, from the far corner of the shop—from a corner where stood a spacious cage tenanted by a jay.

'Oh, are you there?' began Mr. Toppin.

'Don't take notice of him,' urged the woman; 'it makes him worse.'

'*Robert ! Robert !*'

'When visitors come in, he always will speak,' she continued.

'*Bonjour, Robert !—Ah, canaille !*' The speaker had the air of watching for the due effect of his words. He made an addition cautiously—'*Oh, la ! la !*'—and then studied his mistress with a remarkably intent regard.

'He has been well taught, your favourite,' observed Mr. Toppin.

'Too well taught,' was the reply—'sometimes it is more than I can bear.'

'I see that you have cards of persons who give lessons?' Mr. Toppin went on. He indicated, for Mr. Herbert's benefit, a square frame covered with green baize, to which were pinned slips of pasteboard, dog's-eared.

'Most of those are old cards. The persons went away.'

'*Oh, la ! la ! Robert !*'

'And who is Robert—*dis ?*' demanded Mr. Toppin jocosely, of the bird. The woman did not offer to enlighten him. 'Your master, *I* know: your master, *hein*—Monsieur Robert?'

'*Robert, toi que j'aime !*' vocalised the jay imperfectly.

'Be silent, *salaud!*' exclaimed the woman fiercely. The bird hopped from one perch to another, and cogitated. 'I would part with him,' she continued dolefully, 'but for the fact that he was a favourite of my son's. It was my son who taught him to speak. He could whistle other refrains, but he never whistles them now. He could whistle, "*O Philidor, t'as tort !*" except the last note; but he has never whistled it since the death of my son Robert.'

Mr. Toppin hastened to excuse himself. He had not known. Was it a bereavement of recent date——

'Two months ago. He was assassinated and robbed one morning, as he was coming home. It was just before daybreak. They put the case in the papers, because it turned out that there was a history. He was a handsome young man, my Robert, and I had always been afraid he would be drawn away; but I never knew about the history. It was a foreign lady who did not speak French well, and he wanted to learn English. She was infatuated with my poor Robert, and well she might be, for she was nearly as old as I am. Her husband was at home in England: do you know Missouri, in England, monsieur—you are English, are you not?'

The case of Robert Bonnard: Mr. Toppin had known him by sight, and remembered the details perfectly. This was the case of a young fellow who used to hang about certain hotels—he explained to Mr. Herbert—and insinuate an acquaintance, here and there, with elderly or middle-aged females, not long arrived. A sort of Whitechapel 'Arry, Bonnard was, observed Mr. Toppin—but he spoke a Continental language, 'did the timid respectful, sir; had a frightful cheek; called himself a Count; and got money from them to pay the "mortgages on his estate." He never tackled the younger women; it used to be the spinster aunts, and the married frumps come over for a frisk; you'd think they'd be too sensible? Lord bless you! If you'd seen a few of the letters that were found upon him. One of them wrote, "It was the foreign element in you that fascinated me; I seem to have met with you before in so many of those

dear, delightfully wicked French novels." Another wrote about his arms. Ha! ha! I'm only an ordinary detective-officer, and a little bit rough, at times, although I could have graced another spear; but I tell you what, sir, I was ashamed—I was, indeed—when they showed me those letters at the Prefecture; because they joked me about my countrywomen; and they do still; and it's not pleasant; but it's true—ah, it *is* true-ue.'

'*Robert!*' ventured the jay, in an aside.

'And he began to take lessons,' added Madame Bonnard.

'Some of the females were not so very old. When they were from some part of England, they said they were Americans, and when they were Americans they said they were English. It was the courtly lovyer, kep' out of his estate, that took with the English females; what took with the Americans seemed to be the "Comte de la Vallée-Pervenche"—that was the name he had his cards engraved with, sir; the cards were found in his pocket.'

'*Oh, la! la! Robert!*'

'He would have learnt English very quickly, my son would, for he was most intelligent.' Madame Bonnard was addressing Mr. Herbert.

'He took lessons, you say,' demanded Mr. Herbert, 'from——'

'From a neighbour, an Englishman.'

'*Robert! T'es beau, va!*'

'*Salaud! Voyou!* Will you be silent?' exclaimed the woman angrily, half rising from her chair. The bird hopped to another perch, and again cogitated.

'From our friend, I dare say,' responded Mr. Toppin with promptitude. 'An Englishman—M. Allen——'

'The same: a tall, thin—very tall. He was a customer, and we displayed his card amongst the others. He did not charge my son, because I helped to nurse him through his fever.'

'Do you say that he is in poverty?' asked Mr. Herbert.

'Well, he is, and he isn't. He is strange, M. Allen. In his delirium he talked like a rich man, the doctor said—and he talked half-French, half-English. When he thanked me, as he was getting well, and made me a present, he said, "Madame Bonnard," he said, "take this without any scruple. I am independent in my own country, if I like to touch my money. I have been very rich, Madame Bonnard.

Most of it has been lost, by a misfortune in commerce, but there is still enough to live on, if I like to send for it." "I should send for it, M. Allen," I said; "take the advice of a hardworking widow." "Madame Bonnard," he said, "my life has been too useless," he said; "I want to live by my own work, Madame Bonnard; and the only work I can do is to teach my own language." "You have come to a bad quarter, then, my poor monsieur," I said—"the worst, for commerce; and I only wish that I could dispose of my own lease." "I knew the quarter was a bad one for business, Madame Bonnard," he said, "and that was what I wanted. I wanted a struggle—a struggle—a hard, hard struggle; or else I shall die." "But you put the plough before the oxen, monsieur," I said; "why, people don't live for the sake and pleasure of the struggle—they struggle in order that they and theirs may live." "Ah, Madame Bonnard," said he, "I want to support myself for the first time in my life; and I want my work to be useful; and that is why I am trying to get well!" He got well, *pauvre garçon!*'

Her auditors waited.

'But I may be telling you what you are acquainted with already?—No?—You don't know what he has taken to? You don't know how he fills up his time? Mission work. *Pauvre garçon*—he is a religious missionary among the people!'

So natural an outcome of the story—ran Mr. Herbert's thought—and yet the outcome which he never had conjectured. 'Come unto Me. . . . Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.'

Abandonment upon the Rock of Ages; recourse to that solemnity, the invocation lisped in infancy, mumbled in decrepitude; wild appeal to the Beneficence to lift the hand whose grasp was iron; prostrate anguish—the soul still doubting, possibly, still doubting, even whilst it implored the Aid of the Great First and Last, the Unknown: still doubting, though it knelt before the shrine where surcease was promised: still questioning, perhaps, because of congregations that could bend the saintly knee, 'depart in peace,' and in the perpetration of ill, continue: wishing not to question but still questioning, perhaps, because of men and women who in odour of sanctity bespattered the holy

image with their evil deeds: that image which the devout among evil-doers could desecrate with self-assured atrocity. 'Come unto Me . . .;' that simple summons had in his hour of sorest need recurred to Garth; it was well; he had remembered, he had obeyed; and it was well.

But then came the awful point, the stumbling-block—Denomination. Which temple had he entered—which, out of so many?

No doubt he had been loyal to his love; no doubt the Independentism of the Fold at Kensington, the shallow postulates which Evelyn would retail most piously—the doctrines no one understood—no doubt that Independentism of which the fashion had been set by Evelyn herself, the brilliant Mrs. Ormond-Weir, had formed the message crammed into the ears of scoffing French workmen, cynical Parisian roughs, by this poor Allan Garth.

Evelyn attended every Sunday morning at the Fold. And the obese rhetorician who 'spoke so beautifully' from the forum, underneath a sounding-board in imitation mother-of-pearl, never once missed her Thursdays. The young wife of that rhetorician (it was his third young wife) sat in the gallery, at the right hand of the sounding-board, and kept her eye upon the collection plates. If Evelyn could know the harm which she had done—unwittingly, in part unwittingly, urged Mr. Herbert—and if, in contrition, she confided in that spiritual adviser, her unctuous shepherd, the latter would undoubtedly assure her that atonement might be offered by assiduous labours in the church—*his* church. And so it would be. She would make atonement. Shifting responsibility for its adequate degree upon the fat shoulders of her rhetorical shepherd, Mrs. Ormond-Weir would clear her conscience to her own full satisfaction, and think no more about the tiresome business. It was true that in the levities of her own infatuation, in the insolences of her sudden social triumph, she had showered upon the Don-Quixotic mentor of her girlhood open, cruel, and contemptuous slights. But why could he not have taken it all sensibly? Why could he not have put up with it, as they should do, men should, if they were men—and gentlemen—shouldn't they! She wouldn't give another thought to it—not a single further thought.

Yes—she would just give one other thought to it: a re-

flection reassuring for her, blessedly suggested by the shepherd. As Madame Bonnard went on with her narrative, Mr. Herbert closed his eyes and fancied he could hear the whole improving argument. By its fruits the tree was known; by its results the action must be judged. Now, of this action the results were apostolic. Evelyn, our dear sister of Kensington Independentism, had won a soul over from indifference; and in that good work she had come nearer to the Fold herself—the Kensington Fold. She was a good and faithful servant; her days should be long in the land; glory to our proselytizing sister, who from indifference had won or scourged a stubborn soul. Selah.

Yes: but if she gave that other thought to it she should remember that the merit would have lain in bringing to the Fold—even the transitory Fold of Kensington—a spirit gained by happiness, burdened with gratitude and rapture, burning to offer praise; whereas the *rôle* in which our friend Garth now was figuring was—it might be said by people who were sure that no one overheard—too unpleasantly like the poltroon's.

And the essential of religion would be faith. 'Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.' If so, and we knew it from St. Paul, how could we have faith in things not seen, when that which we had actually with our own eyes seen, proved illusory? What if white and slender fingers, closing upon a bared throat, had strangled Faith?

In the tabulated statements, however, of the lunatic asylum periodical report, there was 'religious mania,' too.

'They listen, when he preaches to them as well as he can in our language,' concluded Madame Bonnard; 'he gives them money, now and then, and that is why they listen. When he has gone away, they laugh at him; and the children laugh at him as he goes along—and I don't wonder'—Madame Bonnard herself laughed, as she gazed out into the street—'for indeed he is a droll figure—strangely!'

Mr. Toppin also contributed a smile. It was sympathy. The jay threw in a chuckle of his own; and that was tentative.

'We are going on, now, to our friend, Mr. Allen's,' said Mr. Toppin, preparing to take leave. 'Does he preach to the people in the daytime?'

'Not often. It's at night. You will find him at home, now, I should imagine.'

'*Robert—Robert!*'

'*Silence, toi!*' commanded the woman sternly—'*Fiche-nous la paix!*'

And the precise address?

'It's No. 13—higher up on this side of the way.'

'The number of ill-luck—13!' observed Mr. Toppin pleasantly.

'There's ill-luck in all the numbers here,' muttered the woman—'and it's always Friday; although this is the gay end of the street.'

'*Ah, canaille!*' vociferated the fiend, with a shout of defiance—'*Robert, toi que j'aime!*'

Madame Bonnard sprang up and flung a dark cloth over the cage. '*Oh, la! la!*' they heard in smothered and mournful accents—'*Robert*——'

'I'll buy him from you,' said Mr. Toppin, at the threshold.

Madame Bonnard sat down at the counter trembling. 'I won't part with him,' she returned sullenly, 'I cannot: he was my son's, who taught him. But I know what I must do—I *must*—I know I must do that—he speaks in my son's voice—I *must*—— I don't want to do that—but I *must*—he is not a human being—though—but I must: I am sure I *must*—soon—I must drive away the voice——'

Mr. Herbert and his companion passed into the street, and continued on their way in silence. No. 43: No. 33——

'I do believe there's something at the very house!' exclaimed Mr. Toppin. 'Isn't it No. 13, sir, where that group is in the roadway?'

It was indeed No. 13, the house in front of which those few idlers were assembled.

'Different altogether from the far end of the street, ain't it, sir?' remarked Mr. Toppin. 'Much gayer up here.'

They turned into the vestibule of No. 13. The concierge, in a ragged blouse, was arranging a row of red flower-pots. As Detective Toppin spoke to him, his eyes fell; he listened with a bemused expression, his regard fixed on the floral ornament of Mr. Toppin's coat—the coarse red geranium.

'M. Allen?' demanded Mr. Toppin laconically.

The man stooped and adjusted the row of red flower-pots.

Two women, loitering at the entrance, stared at the visitors, then at each other, and smiled.

Mr. Toppin repeated his demand.

'Well—what?' answered the man roughly

'He lives here—what story?'

'Sixth story.'

The visitors moved towards the gloomy staircase, past the gloomy lodge. The concierge allowed them to reach the foot of the stairs.

'But you cannot see him,' then announced the concierge; 'he can't receive any callers.'

He looked round at the two unkempt women loitering in the doorway, and laughed with them noiselessly.

'Is he at home?'

'At home? Oh yes, he is at home.'

'Speak plainly, *voyons*,' cried Mr. Toppin, retracing his steps. 'I am a member of the English Sûreté.'

'*La belle affaire!*'

It was one of the women who made the sarcastic comment.

'Well, then,' said the man, after a quick glance at his interlocutor—'go and see the Commissary.'

'The Commissary? Why? What has happened?'

'I am to answer no questions.'

Mr. Toppin would have consulted his companion, but the latter had turned hastily away.

'And no one is to go into the room,' added the lodge-keeper, beginning to trim his plants.

'I see!' Mr. Toppin slowly tossed his head. '*Mesdames*,' said he to the loiterers at the entrance, 'we don't live in the Rue Caïn with impunity, do we?'

'When we are foreigners, we stay in our own country,' retorted the younger of the two.

'A good-looking fellow,' remarked the elder, in only half an aside—'*de la force*—what I call a man!'

This was T. T.

'Different from the long simpleton upstairs—*oh, la! la!—la! la!*'

'Not so tall quite, but more distinguished and better-looking—*ah, je te crois!*'

It was T. T. who was distinguished.

'Oh, for distinction, the other! He has new gloves, and

besides—— But what's the matter with him? Perhaps a member of the dead one's family.'

'What do you say then, sir?' demanded Toppin impatiently. 'A call on the Commissary?'

And so the end had come! Death had preceded them. A day's delay, and it was death that greeted them. One day's delay! 'Is this on my head? might *I* have averted this?' On whose head was this?

'When did—when did it happen?' asked Mr. Herbert, aloud.

'How do I know?' answered the concierge. 'Ask the Commissary!'

'*Eh bien, mon vieux*,' observed Mr. Toppin; 'if you think that's the way to earn five-franc pieces, you're nicely mistaken.'

'When people have five-franc pieces to give,' responded the man deliberately, 'they give them—they don't talk about them.'

Mr. Herbert plunged his hand into his pocket.

'No, no, sir!' exclaimed Toppin in English; 'this man may be implicated! We'll go round at once to the Commissary of the quarter.'

CHAPTER V.

THE office of the Commissary lay at no considerable distance from the Rue de Caen. An announcement of Mr. Toppin's quality procured for the two visitors an immediate audience. The great man of the quarter received them in his private room. He was preoccupied. He had evidently been pondering.

Mr. Toppin performed a graceful ceremony of introduction—for, first himself—inscribed at the Prefecture—then for his companion, who had journeyed to Paris from London on business of special concern to the Englishman just deceased at No. 13, Rue Caïn—Rue de Caen.

'It's *épatant*, all the same,' observed the tolerant functionary; '*épatant—épatant!* Did you ever see such a street?'

'*C'est de l'épatance*,' assented Mr. Toppin slangily.

'A friend or relative of the deceased?'

The great man indicated Mr. Herbert, to whom he turned with a perfectly sincere homage to his better clothes.

Mr. Herbert briefly explained his position in the matter. Would it be possible for him to learn without delay the circumstances of the fatal case?

The circumstances? Ah! there lay just the point. As these gentlemen arrived, the Commissary had been revolving the whole case in his mind. Everything looked clear enough; and you would have said that there was nothing to be done but register the death and sanction the interment. But with a street like that in your district, you contracted onerous habits of reflection. He had judged it advisable to send up to headquarters. Ahem! hem!

'What are the appearances?' asked Mr. Toppin.

'Suicide.'

The Commissary pondered again.

'I knew him by sight,' he presently resumed; 'a poor wandering lunatic, this M. Allen; but he did no harm, and we never interfered with him.'

'Do you really mean,' inquired Mr. Herbert, horror-stricken, 'that his mental faculties——'

'Well, I call anybody a lunatic who does what he did. He *must* have been a lunatic. We knew that he was far from being in need, and yet he chose to live like that. He wandered about the back streets and preached. He came round here one day to lodge an information. He had been robbed. I happened to be absent, and my deputy saw him. It seems that my deputy told him that people who lived in the Rue de Caen either had no money to be robbed of, or must expect some day or other to be robbed of the money they had, unless they were persons who robbed other people. He had better go elsewhere, and be *gay*. He said to my deputy—very politely *du reste*—that he had not applied to him for counsel upon that question, but that he simply wished for the recovery of a portion of what had been stolen, and not to see us again. The theft had been committed at the place he lived in, No. 13. He lived in a large garret himself, and gave his money to other people. Someone had gone into the garret in his absence, forced a trunk, and taken away a sort of miniature strong-box. In the box were valuable jewellery, a large sum of money, and a few letters and a photograph. He did not care about the jewellery or

the money, but he insisted upon our trying to recover the other things. Well, you may guess—ha! ha! As soon as that got known in the neighbourhood, back came the letters and the photograph by post. I dare say it was somebody in the house, or somebody among his converts—because he used to think he made converts—but we could not get him to prosecute, and it was of no use going on. But what do you think they had done? It was droll, too—ha! ha!—my deputy, who saw it, said it was drolly done. The photograph was that of a young girl—a girl of great beauty, about sixteen or seventeen—and the droll rascal who returned it through the post—ha! ha! ha!—he had drawn upon the photograph! he had put a pipe into her mouth at one corner, and words, which she was supposed to be saying, out of the other corner. No, it's *impayable* for gaiety, the French character, always gay—you see it in the prison cell and on the battlefield: will have its joke: always that gaiety. Well, after us the deluge; life is short, and there's nothing serious but enjoyment. Ah, ha! ha!—those words! it seems they went so well with the expression of the face—oh, ho! ho!'

Mr. Toppin joined cordially in the laugh. Their voices were naturally attuned, and formed the most effective unison. The Commissary was a burly personage, of the medium height. Warts adorned his countenance; his hair bristled.

'Poor fellow!' said Mr. Herbert through his teeth.

'Yes—he didn't expect it. The packet was addressed to him here; and my deputy told me that when he opened it, and stood staring at the photograph, if he hadn't been mad before, he was right out of his mind, *then!* He looked about as if he did not know that he was in our office; and then he stared at the photograph again, and put it in the Bible which he used to carry, and read some verses out of the Bible to himself. My deputy was talking of it again this morning. If it had been real emotion, you know—either of us here, for instance—it would have been touching; but in *him*—oh, *he* was mad.'

'Not really insane, I suppose, M. le Commissaire,' suggested Toppin; 'not mad like the people who are shut up, but——just——so, so——'

'They called him the long, mad Englishman; everybody

did; the people he gave money to, and visited when they were ill—*they* did—and they ought to know!'

'A spider in the ceiling—a bee in the bonnet, as they say in the north of my country——'

'A whole cobweb in the ceiling; a regular hive of bees! —*Saperlipopette!* A man doesn't break down like that because of a beautiful girl's photograph made funny, and a few defaced letters—not a Man, a sane, manly Man! Beautiful women can get all they covet, usually, in this world: they know it; they are usually spoilt by their successes, and abuse their power; and they're fair game for the droll rascals like our unknown and indelicate thief. And if your M. Allen had been in his right mind, he would have been gratified at the caricature; he would have been the first to laugh. Assume that it was a woman he had loved—and no doubt it was—we have all loved, have we not, messieurs? I have suffered desperately myself, in many cases for weeks together, both before and after my marriage; it's our temperaments, messieurs, to suffer often—we are ardent, *nous autres Gaulois*—with us, it is the *coup de feu*, bang!—and then, oh, I don't deny that if you're a manly man—*Que diable!* you don't let a woman monopolize you! Then it's the (yes, there are many of us that are still like that, we of the old race of Gauls that fought under Vercingétorix against Julius Cæsar), it's *ouf! allez, marchez—A qui le tour!*—Aha! hem! And that's the way to interpret life: be joyous: leave religion to the priests—and they don't like to see you trespassing on their ground, either: be gallant with the fair, follow in the steps of our knightly ancestors, who fought for the entire sex, and knelt to all of them, and won rich guerdons, and many of them; and then, for one, another recompenses you. Be the butterfly, not the flower! Whereas, you sentimental, moping, solemn English——'

'We're the flowers—ha! ha! ha! Bravo, M. le Commissaire!'

Mr. Toppin really had a rich young voice, and when he roared at anything that tickled him, his tones would ring out so musically, and rumble so, that it would have done any man's heart good to hear him; he would have made the Duke say—Theseus, Duke of Athens—'Let him roar again; let him roar again.'

'Yes—Oho! hem!—flowers like your geranium!'

Mr. Toppin, who beamed with mirth, mechanically sniffed at the floral ornament, and abruptly stopped in his merry peal.

'The letters were defaced, too, you say?' asked Mr. Herbert.

'They were—yes, they were defaced, and obscenities were scrawled across them. Oh, a mere joke. It was a reminder to him that he should have burnt them. What the deuce! If they were old letters, did he think that the writer remembered having written them? Why couldn't he laugh at the ridiculous photograph, like a man? Did he imagine that the original had never turned him into ridicule?'

Oh, these random strokes of the bistoury!

'I should have been glad to learn, M. le Commissaire,' resumed Mr. Herbert hurriedly—'I should have been glad to learn what papers the deceased left—what documents——'

'Certainly, certainly. You will only have to make your application at the Parquet, and prove your interest. That will demand a little time, however.'

'How long?'

'Ah—that I can't say. Perhaps a day or two; perhaps a week or two. It may depend a good deal on the circumstances of the death.'

'I cannot run through them, now—cursorily—with your mandate, in your presence?'

'My dear sir, anything to be agreeable to you, but—that would be quite a breach of the formalities. And what I judged to be important has already been placed under seal. Those seals were affixed this morning.'

'What is the nature of the suicide?'

'The nature? He strung himself up to a hook in one of the rafters. He hanged himself. At least, when I say he hanged himself, I mean to say that there is every appearance of his having hanged himself. It was the fact of the robbery I have just told you about, which prompted me to send the case down at once. When we make our search we shall see what valuables there are upon the premises, if any. Plenty of experts live in the Rue de Caen. We don't mind their living along that street, because the best of them are known to us personally, and we can keep our eyes upon the principals. If one of them disappears, we know that he has

been at work. But we can't keep our eyes on all of them; and for the Commissary of the quarter—*votre serviteur*—it's an arduous responsibility. Two pairs of hands, however, can easily garotte a man, and string him up to a crossbeam. We shall see. Your M. Allen passed for being well off; and he was loose in his wits. A good expert might have done it single-handed, if not pressed for time.'

'Loose in his wits!' echoed Mr. Herbert irritably. 'Did you ever converse with him?'

'Never—myself. But it was well known—the long, mad Englishman. The incoherencies he preached were pyramidal, it seems——Hem!—Ahem!—Oho!—Hah!—py-ra-mid-al!'

'I think, then, M. le Commissaire,' said Mr. Herbert, rising, 'that nothing remains for me to do, at this moment, but to thank you for your gracious reception, and to——'

'Oh, you are not disturbing me at all.'

'As to the circumstances of the death, when will you know definitely?'

'Perhaps this very afternoon. As a friend of M. Toppin's—I had not the pleasure of M. Toppin's acquaintance, but I knew him by repute, from a colleague of mine'—the speaker turned to Detective Thomas Toppin, 'the Commissary of the—the Arrondissement——'

'Ah, yes,' responded the gentleman addressed, expanding his chest, 'that case over the water.'

'As a friend of M. Toppin's you may command my services. The examination of the premises, presently, will be a mere matter of form. You may learn the result here this afternoon.'

'I will call,' said Mr. Herbert.

'But why not wait? M. Renaud should be here presently.'

'Renaud?' exclaimed Toppin.

'Perfectly.'

'Renaud is coming on here?'

'Perfectly.'

'About this case of our compatriot?'

'This very case.'

'*'Cré nom de noms de noms de noms!*'

'Ah, bah!'

The amazed functionary looked to Mr. Toppin for an explanation.

'Let us wait, sir,' urged Mr. Toppin in English.

'I can't stand this fellow's gabble,' said Mr. Herbert.

'Oh, he's all right! A jewel among Commissaires. We'd better wait, sir. It begins to look serious.' Mr. Herbert returned a step or two. 'This gentleman thinks that, all things considered, M. le Commissaire,' Mr. Toppin went on unblushingly, 'he cannot do better than act upon the suggestion which you have so courteously thrown out for his own convenience.'

'Very well. I am expecting M. Renaud every minute.'

'But I don't understand—pardon me, M. le Commissaire—I don't understand why the Illustrissime should have been sent for, if there was nothing in the case but suicide.'

'I did not ask for him. They replied that M. Renaud would come on here.'

'That's what puzzles me.'

'Oh, I suppose they mean to convict somebody or other this time. The regular Sûreté men have failed too often lately. Three unexplained Rue Caïn crimes in succession! They were not altogether in Renaud's line, those affairs—too simple—affairs among the lower orders—motive, trivial gain; too simple—and yet the Sûreté men could never trace them home. I suppose that this time they mean business at the Sûreté. They'll make this suicide out to be a murder, and you'll see that somebody will be convicted. Renaud is frightful, when he means to convict.'

'I hope—I really do hope, M. le Commissaire—that the story of the letters and the photograph may get to M. Renaud's ears.'

'Why?' demanded Mr. Herbert.

'Because—ha! ha! Eh, M. le Commissaire?'

'Yes—ha! ha! Because!'

'Because?'

He might have borne in mind, Mr. Herbert might, that he was not interrogating one of his clerks in Budge Row.

'Because, you see, sir, it is one of the maxims of the Impechable Renaud,' Mr. Toppin meant 'impeccable;' '*ce policier impeccable*, as they call him——'

The Commissary nodded maliciously.

'Yes, that's it,' said he.

'It's one of his maxims that you'll find feminine innocence

in every tragedy of real life, if you'll only look for it FAR ENOUGH.'

'Feminine "innocence"? Because, otherwise, I've heard something like that before.'

'Absolute innocence—yes, sir,' said Toppin.

'Just so,' acquiesced the Commissary.

'And the photograph may send him on a false track. They say that Renaud always begins by assuming the lady's guilt—oh, in his cases they're never women, nor females; they're always ladies; the dear man; bless him; what chivalry!—"for the sake of treating himself to the subsequent pleasure of discovering their invariable innocence." I've learnt it by heart, sir. It's nice that—it's pretty—it's heroic almost. Only he won't take up the commoner cases. The language, and the actions, and the surroundings wouldn't be ladylike among the populace, I dare say. Though I don't see that a Bayard ought to draw the line.'

'It's true,' observed the Commissary, 'it's true that Renaud is of a cynicism *effroyable!*'

'And I should like to see him go wrong, just for once in a way. I'd like to see him questioning the concierge about lady visitors, mysterious ladies—veils—cabs left at the corner of the street—gold coins tendered in payment, and "Oh, never mind the change"—disguised voice—"My good man, can you inform me——" Yes: if he wants to find the original of that photograph, he'll very likely have to search a parish register of deaths, and for that purpose take a return ticket to the land that gave me birth, Hangleterre, or, as we pronounce at home, M. le Commissaire, Hingland.'

'Ze ol' Hinglan,' approved the functionary. 'Ho yais.'

'Because I'd prefer to trust to your judgment, M. le Commissaire. It's clear that this is a simple case of suicide by a man of unsound mind.'

A spare individual, with the visage of a wine-bibber, and wearing a threadbare office coat, entered softly at this moment, after a fumbling rap at the door. As he stood in the rear of the visitors, and glanced towards his chief, his lips moved, but no sound issued from them.

'Very good,' replied the Commissary, rising majestically. 'Gentlemen, a few minutes only——'

'That's his deputy,' said Mr. Toppin, when the door had closed behind the two officials, '*le chien du commissaire*, as

they say. Renaud's arrived, I s'pose. Why couldn't he say so? They're always up to all these games of mystifying you. Wanted to impress us. And what's the good of it?'

'This M. Renaud'—began Mr. Herbert anxiously—'you talk of him as if he were quite a personage?'

'A personage! Have you never heard of him, sir—Simplice Renaud?'

'Renaud—of the French police? Never, I give you my word.'

'Well, well—that's extr'orn'ry!'

'There is one man I *have* heard of,' remarked Mr. Herbert, with visible impatience, 'and he was a very wonderful man indeed—M. Lebœuf.'

'Who, sir?'

'M. Lebœuf.'

'Of the Sûreté?'

'I suppose so.'

'There's been no man of that name at the Sûreté as *I* can recollect!'

'I mean—in the books.'

'Oh, the books. M. Lebœuf of those books! Oh, ah, yes. Quite right, sir. *That* M. Lebœuf—of course! But that's a long time ago. And I believe I know the old chap it was meant for—a native-born Parisian he is. Ah, they made him out very clever, sir, didn't they? But the old chap I know must have been cleverer still, and not so noisy. When I first took up my duties here, sir, as a plain-clothes officer representing Scotland Yard, I thought I'd better learn the ways of my French colleagues that I'd read about as being so wonderful in gay Parry, as we used to say; because I used to believe that, when I was a young feller at the Yard. It's funny how the foreign names go down in England, sir; it is, indeed! In pretty nearly everything but fighting, sir—you tell the English people that the foreigners are better than their own men, and they'll believe you in a minute; especially when the foreigners tell them so, too. Now ain't that funny, sir?' Mr. Toppin pondered too. 'There's two or three of 'em at the Sûreté that ain't so bad,' he continued, 'but as for geniuses!—our Inspector Byde at home would leave the whole field of 'em at the distance—all, that is, except M. Renaud.'

'So that,' asked Mr. Herbert anxiously again, 'he seriously is formidable, this M. Renaud?'

'To judge him by results, a very—very—very clever man, sir,' answered Detective Toppin, with deliberate emphasis. 'Take that from me.'

'Would he be—good-natured?'

Mr. Herbert blushed as he put the question.

'Might—might not; can't say. Mystery.'

'I thought the Commissary's manner was rather odd, as he referred to him?'

'They're jealous of him—and afraid of him, too! I pitch into him myself, sometimes, but that's for another reason. The public idolize him; and if he didn't keep so carefully in the background, if he'd only make a political speech or two, they'd run him into the Chamber of Deputies, and perhaps want him to be — goodness knows what! Lots of the functionaries are afraid of him, because he knows a few little functionary dodges. There *is* something funny about this business. What *I* want to make out is, whether the Commissary knew something which he wouldn't tell us, or whether he's getting something up for M. Renaud. There's not one of 'em that wouldn't like to sell M. Renaud.'

'Have you met him often?'

'Now and then. And what I can't make out is, whether he's a man of good principle or bad. They don't know what his origin is; but he speaks English as well as you or me, almost, sir—with a little hesitation, sometimes, and that's all. And educated! Oh!—Sometimes I think he's a man of bad principle, and then I'd like to join them all in upsetting him; and sometimes I think he's a man of good principle, and then I'd like to see him convict a few more functionaries—because that's what he did once—convicted some functionaries. Ah, he's a wonderful man! Make-up? What he can do with that face of his, is awful—it ain't natural, sir, what he can do with it. You'd never know him; and why you don't recognise him, blest if you can tell! It's in the little touches; and you can't find 'em. He's a tallish chap for a Frenchman—tall and slim; but he'd say "Good-morning" to you, and go away, with his grand air, and presently a little old man'd come in and ask a question, and you'd never guess it was Renaud. Some say he's been in diplomacy, abroad; some say his mother

was an operatic singer—one of the bad 'uns. Some say that he's in our business because it's a passion with him, like the best people in everything—*I* don't know. All I know is that he's a real artist—but fastidious. I was talking to Inspector Byde about him, one day, and Byde said that Renaud was a born detective—or a born criminal.'

'Ah?'

'Yes. And, would you believe it?—he's never had his portrait taken! One reason why they are so jealous and afraid of him is that he's said to possess his own private police; not many of them, but good; and no one knows who they are. Where the money comes from, *I* don't know; but he certainly does seem to be able to find out everything whenever he likes, and to hush up everything he wants to hush up, too. He'd find it rather awkward, though, to shut a case up that had *me* in it, if I didn't want to shut it up. But it's a strange thing. They say that his power——'

The door suddenly flew open.

CHAPTER VI.

Mr. Toppin's growl resembled the last echoes of reverberating thunder.

'That's it!' said he. 'Thought he'd catch me looking at his documents, I dare say.' The Commissary moved by, after a rapid glance that perhaps justified the growl. 'Does he fancy I would, I wonder, sir?'

'No, Mr. Toppin,' pronounced a gentle voice slowly, in English, from the doorway.

'M. Renaud!'

Detective Toppin wheeled his chair round, and started to his feet.

Mr. Herbert rose also, and turned.

'I am happy to inform you, gentlemen,' announced the Commissary at his bureau, 'that there will be no objection on the part of M. Renaud to your attending with us at these premises, immediately, should you so desire.'

The two visitors conveyed their acknowledgments in a slight salute, which the last-comer returned almost imperceptibly, a tiny wrinkle at each corner of the mouth indicating

at the same time that a smile might be intended to be present, or that he might possibly have just recovered from a smile.

'So far as I am concerned,' the Commissary went on solemnly, 'I am happy to efface myself before M. Renaud. Ahem! Hem!'

M. Renaud half raised his drooping eyelids in the direction of the speaker, and deepened the tiny wrinkle at each corner of his mouth. An awkward silence ensued. The Commissary appeared to be stowing away documents.

'I trust, messieurs,' said Mr. Herbert, constrained in spite of himself—'I trust sincerely that our presence may infringe no—no regulations—none of the usages——'

He addressed his words instinctively to the figure motionless near the door; a slender figure, neatly dressed; a not upright figure, with a tarnished alabaster mask.

'Oh, you see,' responded the Commissary, beginning to bustle, and looking for everything at once—'you see—hem! hah!—M. Toppin being an English colleague, accredited to the Prefecture—you see—where are those *diables de*—where are those seals, at present!—where—M. Crispin, M. Crispin! where have you placed—Hah! here!—never mind, M. Crispin!—you see, monsieur, that—yes, I shall want to take a few notes: now there never is, just when you need the use—where can that idiot Crispin have placed—M. Crispin! M. Crispin! Are you there? *Bon!* Don't disturb yourself. Hem! Ho! but—where did you place—Hah! That's all right, then!—no matter, M. Crispin! You see, gentlemen, that—— Will it rain, or will it not rain? will it not rain? "Sat is se question!" as you say in English—ha! ha! Oh, "I spik English"—yais—"Times is money"—I spik English—but not like M. Renaud, for instance—— Now, if I could find—if I could only find—— Do you see that heavy cloud, up there? M. Crispin! M. Crispin! what have you done with—oh, I must go and tell that imbecile of a Crispin that—because—Hah! *c'est bien*, M. Crispin, *c'est bien!* Don't disturb yourself, M. Crispin——'

Mr. Herbert scanned the bloodless, expressionless visage before him with an anxiety which he was unable to account for, but which at the same time he was unable to subdue. The observer might, indeed, at his leisure study the countenance of M. Renaud. Seldom the latter raised his drooping eyelids, it seemed. When he did look at you—he had

glanced at Mr. Herbert whilst the latter was speaking just now—it was with eyes of clouded blue or gray, flecked, in this light, with a note or two of deep amber. The eyes expressed neither kindliness nor cruelty; they were neither alert nor, of course, 'keen'; that they should ever be invested with any 'searching' character, that they should ever voluntarily embarrass anyone, ever betray any kind of incertitude, seemed a matter of the utmost impossibility. What had struck Mr. Herbert just now, was the curious beam from these clouded, speaking eyes—the beam of a contained, voluminous intelligence.

As for the face itself, it offered the not unusual spectacle of perfect plainness, united to perfectly regular features. Moved by expression, it could have been either handsome or repulsive. Immobile, it was unnoticeable—except, perhaps, for its glaring pallor. And yet not unnoticeable altogether; for Mr. Herbert, who tried to think that he had before him but a very ordinary man, could not help, when he looked away, returning to the study of this histrion's head.

Wickedness lurked behind this blank, commented Mr. Herbert: wickedness, or mere stony egotism, sometimes wicked, sometimes good: or was it the affectation, simply, of the wicked and the stone-like? We have seen these affectations—and others—have we not? Some of us may have envied their success with people we would wish to have esteemed. *You* won't deny the success of affectations, Herr Winkelpfoff? Nor you, Balsamo, from the Levant? No, nor you, modern and conjugable Greek? How charming must it be for all of you, impostors, that in this crowded world so many clever people should be so eager to be imposed upon—that, until they are well imposed upon, so many clever people should be so unsatisfied!

Mistress Lurid, perpetratress of those naughty tales (what *can* you know about such matters, mistress? And why on earth strive to render them attractive? 'Tis not for *us* you write the tales—you write them for your own sex! Oh, desist!), would have doated upon and would have gloated on the lurid (we thank thee, mistress, for teaching us that word) 'suggestiveness' of Simplice Renaud, his figure-head.

It was the kind of visage which young Lara Gosling, of, say, Giaour Gardens, W., would have purchased at the

price of more than twelve months' pocket-money. How that young man who, with life before him, had seen everything, and who, at nineteen-and-a-half, could already hint at 'lurid' episodes in a 'past' that has been 'terrible'—could he have borrowed from Simplice Renaud this natural mask, how the young Lara would have posed about parlours, skulked by the smoking-room, slunk away from senior members of his own sex, or overshadowed blithesome couples at the mazy dance!

The poet has told us of a heroine—as to whose smile were her smile all he dreamed, he sang, 'Then the world were not so bitter But a smile could make it sweet'—that cold and clear-cut was her face—'faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null,' her face was! Now, if the ideas of the regular and the null had not here involved the qualifications of the splendid and the icy, two out of those three paradoxically picturesque articles in the inventory would have accurately described the physiognomy of M. Renaud. For it was not the ice that the onlooker thought of, as he scrutinized Simplice Renaud; it might have been plaster of Paris that he thought of, but it was not anything consociated with either frost or snow.

Perhaps it had the look of being cosmetically perfumed. Perhaps a plaster-cast from a crude Sardanapalus—characterless, but correct—might have rendered very fairly the lines and surface of this face.

As if through the eyelets of a plaster mask—as if, in the rear of a barricade, detected, through loopholes, in the act of stealthily passing—the orbs of M. Renaud's intelligence gazed now and then as through a vizard, like twin orbs emerging from penumbra.

The eyebrows were heavily marked. Dull-brown in colour, they exactly matched the close-cropped hair. M. Renaud wore his hair square-cut at the side of the forehead; along each temple, it formed an abrupt perpendicular line, and it came down to each ear in a thick patch.

To sum the effect up in Mr. Herbert's impression, the face looked like a smooth cast in plaster, surmounted by a tightly drawn-down wig. It seemed, when the tiny wrinkle deepened at the corners of the mouth, that the surface there would crack and peel, and there disclose the true complexion. But—the true complexion?—was it not, then, this

—was it not this unearthly whiteness, then? Difficult, in the subdued light of a dull day, to pronounce. There was no line at the neck to indicate the apparent juncture of a 'made-up' head. There was one line at the right side of the neck, rather low, beginning midway from the throat, and only visible for an instant, as M. Renaud turned his head towards the door at his left hand; but this, too, was a white line—broad and glistening.

The man who opened the door was the wine-bibber.

'Can I assist M. le Commissaire?' said he.

'Oh, M. Crispin—you are there! I was just on the point of summoning you. M. Crispin is invaluable to me!' The Commissary, quitting his bureau, addressed himself jauntily to M. Renaud.

'I am well aware,' answered M. Renaud, in his gentle voice, 'of M. Crispin's value.'

Mr. Toppin smiled to himself, and drew out his cigar-case. The Commissary drew forth his own case of cigarettes, but his jauntiness had vanished. Of the two offers, M. Renaud accepted the Commissary's. The long slim fingers of the white hand, clasping the cigarette not lightly enough, recalled to Mr. Herbert an old theory of his own—not a theory founded upon the anthropometrical record of the sometime deceased Tropmann.

'I'll tell you what it is, sir,' murmured Mr. Toppin, when they had regained the street; 'all these officials are a-watching of one another!'

'Well—let's get on—and get this over!'

'What's your impression of Renaud, sir?'

'A d——d scoundrel!'

'Well, I don't know. I'm not so sure of it. You'd think so to-day; but he's too fond of making people think he's worse than he is: that's *my* opinion!'

'A d——d dangerous fellow!'

'He'll hear you, sir.'

'Very well. He'll hear me.'

'Yes, but that's not the way to get this through nicely. I want that Private Inquiry Office; and if there's people in this that we'd like to extricate——'

'We're in his hands.'

'Well, I don't know. P'raps we are, p'raps we ain't. P'raps he'll be in *our* hands before he's done.'

They were following in the rear of the Commissary and M. Renaud; and behind them marched a policeman.

'Are you strong enough, Toppin?' said Mr. Herbert.

'Me, sir? Strong enough? You give me half a chance, Mr. Herbert, sir, and I'll be there—there or thereabouts. Old England for ever! Three cheers! Hooray!'

Mr. Toppin's cheer, though heartfelt, was *sotto voce*.

'Mind it's "there," and not "thereabouts," then,' observed Mr. Herbert. 'A miss, you know, comes to about the same thing as a mile.'

'Ah—r—, *I* know! You say that, sir, because I don't get myself up to look the artful. I can't, sir. I hate it. But let T. T. have half a chance, and he'll be there, right on the spot. You'll see.'

'Look here, Toppin, I shall have much more confidence in you if you won't promise anything at all. But if you *must* promise, don't do it in that mysterious fashion.'

'Me, promise! Me, a talker! No. Never. But do you know what old Colonel Sampson said to me? "Toppin," he says, "you don't speak up!" "No, Colonel," I says, "I don't like it." "It's a cur'us thing," he says, "but though I've come from Wigwam City," he says, "and you're from London, which is bigger, though it won't be bigger in another hundred years, I speak up more than you do, Toppin," he says. "Yes," I says, "Colonel: it's like that." "Well, why don't you speak up, and be spry?" he says—"got nothing to say?" he says—"Got anything to be ashamed of?" *Me* nothing to say, sir! *Me* anything to be ashamed of! You might have knocked me down with a feather; with a cock-sparrow's feather, you might have knocked me down; and I'm thirteen stone odd, in fair condition. "Colonel," I says, "they don't like people that speak up too much in England, unless the people come from other countries." "Ah, my son," he says, "the world that's outside that little island is a bigger world than the world that there is inside; and when you're outside, Toppin, you're not inside, and you'd best speak up!" "Think so, Colonel?" I says. "Sure of it, my son," he says. "I don't like to annoy people, Colonel," I says. "You don't want other people to annoy you, I guess," he says. "No, Colonel," I says, "I don't." "They will then, Toppin," he says, "if you don't speak up as loud as they do." And I've been

speaking up since then, but not much. I don't like it. But that's the f'losphy of it, sir.'

'May be, with some people,' replied Mr. Herbert impatiently; 'but it's of no earthly use in general, except to create discord.'

'Ah, now!'

'And if you do happen to come down, when you've been speaking up, as you call it, you come down very hard indeed!'

'Well, well—now, yes—and so you do.' Mr. Toppin paused reflectively. 'And then, of course,' he resumed, 'it's all a question of the nationality.'

'The nationality be d——d!' said Mr. Herbert, more impatiently than ever. 'Don't talk in that wholesale way!'

'Oh, sir—come! There's a lot in the nationality.'

'In the nationality of character—yes: not in the nationality of race. You can find the same characters in nations that are opposed to one another, in races that are opposite. Noisy people, and quiet people; impudence, modesty; self-esteem, self-depreciation; you find the same thing in all communities. The difference lies in the proportion to the mass. And I don't, of course, say that the proportions are not different.'

Mr. Toppin, rather nettled, opened his eyes widely, widely.

The figures in front of them turned into the Rue de Caen. M. Renaud halted, and he and his companion waited for the others to rejoin them. As they stood at the corner, a stout, matronly woman, passing with a basket on her arm, dropped a slight curtsey to M. Renaud, who took no notice of the salute.

'You don't come so far as this to have your fortune told assuredly?' the Commissary was remarking as Mr. Herbert joined them. 'One of the few honest fortune-tellers of my quarter,' he added, gazing after the woman, 'honest, because she believes in what she tells you.'

'Have you many fortune-tellers in your quarter, M. le Commissaire?'

Mr. Toppin, who put the question, walked on in front with that magnificent functionary, adorned with the sash of office. His companion seemed a little flustered, said Mr. Toppin to himself,

'Yes, but not of the best class. In this neighbourhood they are the receivers of stolen goods. In the better neighbourhood of my quarter they are — anything you like. Worthy old ladies to look at. But you know what Paris is.'

'Oh, just so.'

To Mr. Herbert's surprise, his companion entered spontaneously into conversation with him. They were out of earshot of the other two. M. Renaud spoke in English, with but the faintest accent, in the same gentle voice. To judge by his slight stoop, and downcast eyes, he might have been fastidiously picking his footsteps—or he might have been discoursing to the pavement.

'Fortune-telling is illegal in England? With us it covers many industries.'

'Even among the prosperous practitioners?'

'Especially among the prosperous.'

'As for instance—what industries?'

'They are intermediaries, of all sorts.'

'In business—trade operations?'

'Yes; and swindling operations.'

'Why don't you suppress them?'

'Oh, they are useful to us. To ingratiate themselves with the police, they are nearly always willing to betray their clients.'

'Spies, then?'

'Sometimes in the regular pay of the police.'

'In the pay of the police?'

'Occasionally. As a rule they prefer the line of matrimonial agency—with the matrimony left out.'

'But they advertise in the newspapers?'

'To tell fortunes: yes, they do. And we are much obliged to them for their enterprise. We make many captures through the professors of chiromancy, cartomancy, necromancy, geomancy. The somnambulistic mediums in the fashionable quarters are particularly useful to us.'

'How?'

'People consult them.'

'The people *you* are likely to want?'

'Just those people. As to probable successes—as to possible escapes; the occasion itself being left unspecified.'

'One would have thought that people of that class would know a little better?'

'Evil-doers? Oh no—I find them superstitious, as a rule. But of course other people consult the wizards and the fortune-tellers—other than evil-doers.'

'So I conclude.'

The tiny wrinkle deepened.

'You are thinking of what our functionary said to me just now,' returned M. Renaud. 'But that woman was an agent of my own.'

'That middle-aged, rather stupid-looking woman, with the basket on her arm?'

'The very same. Stupid, indeed. For that curtsey she must be dismissed. A pity. Our friend the functionary now and then consults her.'

'His own agent!—he consults a fortune-teller who is his own agent?'

'*My* agent: not theirs. Ah, she has been habitually consulted by all sorts of people: some of them inhabiting the Rue Caïn. There was one tenant of the street who never did consult her: your compatriot, the preacher: your Mr. Allen, otherwise Garth.' He paused, and then added—'A new-comer into the Rue Caïn! Of course, my agents had to learn something of his antecedents. They traced him to the Rue de Monceau. Oh, I am well served. Now, here is a detail in confidence. My fortune-teller has been consulted not by, but *about*, this Englishman—*L'Anglais de la Rue Caïn*. And by whom? Ah, she has been a useful agent! But indiscretions are unpardonable.'

They had arrived within sight of No. 13.

'I am really much obliged to you for your communicativeness,' returned Mr. Herbert. 'Don't you think that your confidence on the last point might have been extended to our functionary friend—who has no doubt been making confidences.'

'Needless. He divined it just now.'

'And the poor woman?' suggested Mr. Herbert, after a pause.

'The poor woman?'

'Can she stay in the neighbourhood? Will not the Commissary—will not the police—I mean, will she not be persecuted, henceforward—or——'

'She must consult the cards on that point. It was her business to know what was to happen. But you must not

imagine that she is in poverty. Her poverty is all pretence. She has another and a more lucrative occupation—quite distinct from my service, but useful to us. She hopes one day to retire into the country as they often do, and live upon her fortune, with Pho-phonse.'

'Pho-phonse?'

'Alphonse. Young enough to be her son. But we know Pho-phonse. He has other views. We expect him to murder her some day, for the money she has hoarded. Let the cards foretell her that.' The speaker's tone and manner were gentle, matter-of-fact, unconcerned. 'She will be no loss to the community.' M. Renaud was still deep in the study of the pavement. Away in front of them, some half-dozen persons lingered opposite the house No. 13. 'I like to talk to your compatriots,' he continued, 'and partly because you are such deceptive listeners. I lived among you once. It's an intellectual pleasure to me to see the average Englishman listening. He has the gift by nature of seldom looking wise. That gives him a great advantage, when dealing with foreigners. Wise looks put people on their guard.'

Mr. Herbert began to listen with uneasiness.

'And when the average Englishman talks, it is usually—not always—to the point, concise and sensible. And even when he vapours, he usually—not always—seems to feel more bound than other people do, to act up to his words, if challenged. I always have liked to talk to your fellow-countrymen, but they are dangerous folk for me to come in contact with; they make me talk.'

'More flies are caught with honey than with vinegar, M. Renaud,' said Mr. Herbert. 'Which is this—the vinegar, or the honey?'

'Ah, I see you know our proverbs.'

The Commissary and Mr. Toppin had preceded them into the house. The same women were loitering at the doorway. M. Renaud checked his companion for a moment, and distantly acknowledged the obsequious salutes of two thick-set ruffians in the middle of the road.

'Well!' demanded M. Renaud, looking up.

One of the two men came towards him.

'Another misfortune in the Rue Caïn, m'sieur! Oh, m'sieur, what a series of misfortunes!'

The speaker's demeanour was plainly hypocritical.

'Well?'

'I said to Achille—"Achille," I said—"they are sure to send for M. Renaud, this time."'

'Well?'

'And Achille said, "Let us go and be on the path of M. Renaud, to salute him, when he arrives, because in what he does, he only does his duty!"'

'Well?'

The man hesitated.

'Oh, think no more of it, M. Renaud,' he went on. The other did not respond. 'Let that all be forgotten, M. Renaud.'

'*Allons, tu n'es qu'un farceur! Je te croyais plus sérieux!*'

'Forget it, M. Renaud.'

'And Achille?' demanded M. Renaud.

'Achille? Oh, let me assure monsieur that I can answer for Achille as for myself!'

'Let it be forgotten, then.'

M. Renaud swung on his heel, and entered the house. Something in his attitude and bearing, as he had been engaged in the brief dialogue with the comrade of Achille, had recalled to Mr. Herbert's mind a particular type of *jeune premier*—the bleached and wearied type of elegant *jeune premier* who is no longer young—the super-refined exponent of extremely finished art, in the State-subventioned home of Beaumarchais. Mr. Herbert thought, not of the imitations of the type, but of the type itself: out of its atmosphere, apparently, in open daylight. There were gentlemen—actors, princes of the blood, ambassadors, professional athletes, gipsies—who would possess this unvarying ease and grace, from art or by nature, in movement as in repose: this commanding freedom from self-consciousness: the rare and opportune gesture, always expressive: few: M. Renaud might have been one of them, but they were few: the number of those who fancied that they had been similarly gifted from their birth, as, indeed, with every imaginable dignity and grace, being, on the contrary, incomputable.

'That is a man who has been swearing a vengeance,' remarked M. Renaud. They mounted the staircase together. 'He has sworn to take my life.'

'You are tolerably safe, then,' responded Mr. Herbert.

'A national characteristic of yours—that! Your national scepticism of the heroic.'

'Yes; as a manifestation in advance.'

'Well, you would be wrong, in—let us see—Corsica, for instance. There the threat has to be counted with.'

'We would rather, in general, be wrong than believe in the menace, or, as a rule, practise the heroism which is manifested in advance.'

'You would be wrong again in the present case. Achille's comrade is not a Corsican, but I know him. He would watch until his opportunity arrived—perhaps wait for years. We ratified peace just now, but of course it meant nothing. A theatrical fellow, this Renaud, eh, eh? But I take my precautions. This man has a bosom friend—Achille. Achille, too, has sworn an oath. Achille is to help him when the opportunity arrives. And Achille, who seldom parts company with him, is an agent of my own. But I can't spare Achille. I want him. Achille must end this. Achille must find our man his opportunity to-night. I shall want the services of Achille for this business of your fellow-countryman.'

The voices of the Commissary and Mr. Toppin reached them from the topmost story.

'You make me talk, you see.'

'Your secret police must drain your resources,' replied Mr. Herbert. 'Why, here are already two in the same street!'

'Chance. It happened so. The key is—good management. You know where you have been likely to arouse enmities: very well. As for our friend downstairs, Achille and I must combine his vengeance for him without delay: something that will lead him to the Assize Court, and thence to St. Martin-de-Ré, the departure-platform for the convict settlement.'

'New Caledonia?'

'Guiana, for choice. At Guiana he will die of yellow-fever.'

They rejoined Mr. Toppin and the Commissary. The latter was questioning the policeman posted at the door. The concierge stood by.

'Now, M. le Commissaire,' said M. Renaud, with a change

of tone; 'let us be favoured with our introduction—let us see our suicide—our Englishman — our fanatic—*l'Anglais de la Rue Caïn!*'

CHAPTER VII.

THE door opened into a narrow vestibule. Directing the concierge to follow him, the Commissary led the way. Mr. Herbert, who entered last, glancing over the shoulders of the men in front of him, saw for the moment a huge comfortless garret, and that was all. But they had come into the presence of death.

At the extremity of the garret, to their left, a dark figure was hanging motionless from a heavy rafter in the uneven roof. The face was turned away from them.

By the wall stood a common iron bedstead, with coarse coverlets. Against the wall were nailed large squares of cardboard, inscribed with texts from Scripture. Mr. Herbert recognised the handwriting. It was that of Allan Garth. He sank down on the low iron bedstead, and buried his face in his hands. And was it this—was it this, the end?

A coward. Such would be her verdict when she knew. He had done it to compromise her; to injure her in society; to bring odium upon her; he had known that all would be known; it was a posthumous reprisal; despicable malignancy; the pettish self-immolation of an angry child; the weakness of a mere thwarted egotist: so, when she knew, would run her verdict. Mr. Herbert flushed with a strange anger himself — strange, because it was an anger against the dead man, for whom, at the same time, he felt the most generous pity. Thus, to earn still further scorn! To degrade their common manhood, thus! Not in the fact of taking his own life, but in the fact of self-destruction for an object surrendered easily to a man who was unworthy: in that sense, to degrade their manhood! What had Garth's enslavement won for him? The smallest concession of sympathy? Gentleness? The barest appeal to his reason? No. He had sown devotion; and he had reaped contempt, ridicule, misinterpretation, incredulity: above all, however, a sort of derisive tolerance. And now, by this act, another harvest—the harvest of her resentment, her hatred for his memory.

What! to concentrate and steel his energies for this last awful resolution and be labelled—coward? To risk what there might be on the other side—to calmly bid farewell to hope, farewell to chance, farewell to merciful change, oh! farewell for ever to the vernal recurrences of life—and then, to be set down as pusillanimous, by not merely those who, rather than face the same ordeal, would have borne worlds of their despairs, their griefs; by not merely those who would have seen their resolution daunted by the simple prospect of the physical pain; by not merely those to whom the greatest of devotions, as well as the greatest of despairs, might be the book sealed, never to be opened—but by *her*.

And this man was to be accused of pettishness, malignity—this man who had been wealthy enough to purchase for his ill all the panaceas which the mart of civilization tricks out for sale—this man, who had submitted from the first with resignation, who had disciplined himself by time and fortified himself by Biblical hortations, and who had fled eventually to that which might have saved him at the outset, and might have rendered him of real use to society—work! Chastened by his sorrow, nearer heaven than those whom sorrow had never struck, warned by Holy Writ of the enormity of what he contemplated, Allan Garth, who had gone before the supreme Judge trusting in the word that much should be forgiven to exceeding love—the spirit that once had animated the dark, motionless figure now hanging from a cross-beam—was to be pursued across the tomb by vilification, slander, the pettishness, the malignity of fellow-creatures—not to forget the Kensington Fold, pious fellow-creatures—on the earth; so much dust and clay!

'And I would pledge all that is dearest to myself,' concluded Mr. Herbert, dropping his hands abruptly and rising to his feet, 'that never did the thought occur to this man that he should curse the loyalty of his own character.'

Detective Toppin came to him.

'Upset you for a moment; stand it, sir—don't give way!'

'We were friends.'

'Yes—it's hard, sir—I know, sir.'

'What are they doing?'

'Renaud is at work.'

M. Renaud, however, appeared to be postponing his work. He seated himself on a trunk which had been drawn up to

the side of a table; and at this moment he was apparently lost in the idle study of his own tapering fingers, clasped upon his knee. The awe with which the concierge had at first regarded him was rapidly disappearing under an expression of dull effrontery. He did not look at all terrible, this fatigued, young-old, or old-young, plainly dressed, simple person—*une espèce d'artisse panné.* He did not look intelligent, either. Why, he was asleep! *Comment, c'était ça, M. Renaud*—the great, the great, *l'archi-grand Simplice! ce n'était qu' ça!* Why, he wouldn't have any more strength than an infant. Some of these types were strong, because they were nervous, like some of the caged animals in the Jardin des Plantes—but not this one! *Ah, 'crédié!* Now, just see the difference in the Commissary. *Fichtre, un bel homme, c'lui-là!* Many hearts must have ached for M. le Commissaire. That species of English, too, *cet être-là,* with a geranium in his button-hole, and a voice like a muffled drum—*un gaillard,* also—equal to the Commissary, and younger. But Renaud—what, *that* the illustrious Simplice! *Tenez,* our Jean downstairs, only half as tall, being very small, and fat *avec ça, boulot,* but strong, having been a blacksmith—our Jean would just take up this wonderful Renaud and break him in two, and throw one piece out of this garret window as far as the Bastille, and the other so far away that it would never drop down. And yet everybody said that Simplice Renaud was so intelligent! Ah, the intelligent one was M. le Commissary! *Hé, hé*—try deception on with a man like that!—*faudrait pas s'y frotter, tonnerre!* What intelligence—*hé, hé! Ouvrons l'œil*—let's keep our eye wide open: *ne te laisse pas entortiller, mon garçon!* Oh, *there's* a functionary whose questions must be thought about, before they're definitively answered; watch him frowning only!

'Hem! Ah—hem! Shall I go on, M. Renaud?' demanded the Commissary.

M. Renaud unclasped his fingers, raised his right hand languidly, and let it fall again. The gesture conveyed: 'Good gracious, M. le Commissaire, what do you think I am waiting for?'

'I will interrogate M. Benoît in detail, then.'

M. Renaud lifted his eyelids in the direction of the speaker, and then went off to sleep again. That, and the

gesture of the left hand seemed to mean: 'No formalities for goodness' sake, with such an ordinary case! If you are going to make this an inquiry all in form, we need the presence of the *juge d'instruction*.' But the case was the plainest in the world, was it not? Suicide. Register it; send the body for a post-mortem, and let us get home. Did anyone claim the body?

'Now, then, Benoît?' said M. le Commissaire hastily.

'What I know, M. le Commissaire?' returned the concierge. '*Ben*—as I wanted to tell you this morning, this is all I know: the defunct not descending at his usual hour this morning, my wife, who had a letter to deliver to a person on the fifth, was to have come up here, to see whether the defunct was ill, he having once had a fever in this house. My wife forgot to bring up the letter, and the person on the fifth took it from the lodge as she went out. So that my wife did not come up here.'

'And that is how she discovered this?'

'No, M. le Commissaire—asking pardon—my wife had nothing to do with the discovery, although if she had come up with the letter she forgot——'

'You said this morning that your nephew discovered this?'

'And I was exact, M. le Commissaire; it was my nephew; my nephew from Montreuil.'

'Ah, your nephew comes from Montreuil?'

'That one does—yes, M. le Commissaire. But I have another—at Montmorency—but he never comes to see us.'

'What is the occupation of your nephew from Montreuil?'

'Jean?'

'*Ah, ça*—what is all this? Will you tell us a plain story?'

'Yes, M. le Commissaire.'

'Well then?' The Commissary frowned and swore terrifically. 'And expedite me that, a little!'

'I was telling M. le Commissaire that my nephew Jean comes from Montreuil.'

'And I was inquiring of M. Benoît what the status of his nephew Jean is, at Montreuil. Take care, Benoît!'

'Jean? Why, at Montreuil there is the peach-cultivation, and that is what he does, my nephew Jean, though formerly a blacksmith's apprentice. At Montmorency, where the cultivation is cherries, my other nephew——'

'*Assez, assez!*'

Mr. Herbert laughed nervously, and glanced towards the extremity of the room. It was an odd fancy, and in a moment the fancy passed; during that moment, however, he had almost seemed to be in sympathy of reminiscence with his compatriot and former friend. 'Was't not at Hallowmas, Master Froth?' But there was no one present who could smile with him. The man who would have understood was the very occasion of the scene. His face was turned away from them, but upon it there could be no smile. The slip-knot had tightened at the nape of the neck, and the head had fallen forward. Suspended thus, the shoulders no longer bowed, the arms apparently limp, the feet pointing downwards—all the muscles of the frame unlocked — the dead man appeared even taller and more ungraceful than the figure which Mr. Herbert so well remembered. The hands had slightly twisted. Over one of the wrists had descended a linen shirt-cuff which was crumpled and frayed. The '*défunt*' was attired in badly-fitting garments of a dulled black. With the feet thus pointing downwards, the shoes he wore partially disclosed the loose white socks. He wore no collar; it lay there, on the table, near M. Renaud, as if, together with the faded black cravat, it had been removed and thrown down carelessly by the deceased just prior to his knotting that stout rope. The ragged tufts of his jet-black hair, too long, heightened the undeniable grotesqueness of the effect. In the open air the garments would have been stirred, the pendent figure might have been lightly swayed by gusts of the mild May breeze. Nevertheless, hanging immobile from the cross-beam of his garret in the Rue Caïn, Allan Garth looked in death—as he had not infrequently been described by light-hearted people in life—a scarecrow.

'As M. le Commissaire is perhaps not without knowing,' hazarded M. Benoît—'it's not the cultivation of the ordinary cherries at Montmorency—it's the cultivation of the cherries with the short stalks, for cherry brandy.'

'But he's mad, he's mad,' bellowed the Commissary. 'Benoît, you are either mad or——! Have a care, Benoît!'

'I am for truth, gentlemen; I only want to tell you all I know. I would not say that my nephew at Montmorency never came to see us, if he ever did come to see us. *Du reste*, it is a relationship of my wife's, not mine, seeing that——'

'*Fichtre! Nom de*—— You've got a third nephew in the apple-country, perhaps?'

'In Normandy, M. le Commissaire? No, M. le Commissaire, not in Normandy, because——'

'Hah—m—m! So much the better, so much the better. Hem! Now, then——'

'We are a family from the Champagne, M. le Commissaire—that is to say, on my side——'

'*Halte-là!—nom d'une pipe!* What an animal, *bon Dieu de Cambronne!* How was it you discovered this?'

'It was my nephew who discovered this—my nephew, Jean, from Montreuil, who has been staying with us, and assisting in the work of the house, and carpentering, and errands for a house of commerce, Boulevard Richard-Lenoir. Ah, what a good nephew! In the season, if M. le Commissaire saw the peaches that he brings to us from Montreuil——'

'*Allons, allons!* The discovery?'

'Who discovered it? Why, when my nephew Jean came home to breakfast with us this morning——'

'Then he had passed the night——'

'At the warehouse, Boulevard Richard-Lenoir—yes, M. le Commissaire, since five o'clock in the afternoon. It happened that the caretaker had a holiday, and my nephew Jean replaced him, seeing that the caretaker has his family at Montreuil.'

'Well, well! And so?'

Noting the few objects that were ranged on the table opposite, by the side of M. Renaud, Mr. Herbert looked for the traces of burnt papers—letters, what-not—either about the floor or upon the hearth. None were to be perceived. It would be singular—contrary to all that he had ever known of suicides—if Garth had laid his life down without a word, a message, an assurance, a last avowal, to A., B., C. or D.—to Evelyn herself. The question, however, of sentimental farewells, formed no business of his own, here. Now that the demise of Allan Ridgeway Garth could be regularly attested, his own professional interest in the matter must be restricted to the points: Had Allan Ridgeway Garth died intestate? If not, where was the will?

Upon the settlement of these points depended the fortunes of the Ormond-Weirs—of Evelyn and her dissolute husband.

If Garth had died without making a will, the Burroughes estate—£650,000, in round numbers—reverted to Hugh Ormond-Weir.

'Then you yourself made the discovery at the same time as your nephew?'

'Not at the same time, M. le Commissaire, under your respect. When my nephew Jean entered the room, and exclaimed, "*Ah, mon Dieu!*" I was still at the threshold.'

'But it was you who got to the door first?'

'Yes—because my wife forgot to bring up the letter to the fifth.'

'Never mind about your reasons, Maître Benoît. In the course of your housework, in which your nephew was helping you, you mounted to this story. You were paid by the defunct to attend to his apartment. You could not comprehend why he had not come down, as was his daily habit, and—well?'

'I knocked at the door, M. le Commissaire, and no one answered. "*Voilà qui est curieux,*" I said to myself, "no one answers when I knock at the door!" I knocked again, and again, more loudly, but still no one replied. "*Voilà qui est fort drole,*" I said to myself—"suppose he had another fever?" Just then up came my nephew, Jean. I said to my nephew, Jean——'

'To the facts, to the facts!'

'There is not a syllable of this that is not facts, I beg M. le Commissaire to believe truthfully. And instead of going to ask the question of the bed-ridden neighbour, my nephew Jean turned the handle of the door, and it opened, whereupon——'

'Now, wait! What is this bed-ridden neighbour?'

'Madame Michon—close on ninety, stone-deaf, and very infirm.'

'And which side of the door was the key—inside or outside?'

'Where it is now—inside, in the lock. It utterly surprised us that the door should have been unlocked. My nephew went in, heedlessly, thinking that the defunct had gone out, but he had no sooner crossed the threshold than he said, "*Ah, mon Dieu!*" and I said, alarmed by his tone, "*Quoi, ton Dieu?*"'

'We must see Jean.'

'M. le Commissaire shall see Jean. At this moment Jean is asleep.'

'You probably placed this room in order prior to my visit?'

'In order? Not so stupid, M. le Commissaire. Who was to pay us? The *bonhomme* was dead; and who else would have paid us? No, M. le Commissaire. And, besides, there was the law. The law does not permit us to touch anything.'

'The law was not present to see what you touched, and what you left untouched.'

'M. le Commissaire shall imprison me, and in my absence ask my nephew Jean, and then he shall imprison my nephew, and in his absence ask me once more; and, to make sure, if he doubts our words, he shall consult the cards; and if he doubts the cards, or they are silent, he shall go to consult the somnambulist, or anyone who can call the spirits, and will call the spirit of M. Allen, our English—*ça!*' He jerked his head in the direction of the corpse.

'How long were you in the room?'

'The time to say "One, two!" My nephew Jean entered first, and exclaimed "*Ah, mon Dieu!*" Alarmed by his accent, which was unusual, for he is courageous—none more so—I exclaimed, following him immediately, "*Quoi, ton Dieu, quoi donc?*" Then I saw the *bonhomme* yonder, *ça*, hanging like that, and everything around him just like this; and I said to my nephew Jean, who trembled so that it was painful to observe him, he being a fellow of a tender heart and an affectionate nature, never coming from Montreuil in the autumn without bringing us peaches, "Idiot," I said, "that can't eat you," I said, "or throw the evil eye upon you! Go round and tell M. le Commissaire, and I will guard the door outside." And so, prudently, we both acted.'

'From which I infer that inasmuch as I found you there on my arrival——'

'I had remained to guard the door ever since! M. le Commissaire guesses rightly. Oh, *moi*, I don't do things by halves—*moi!*'

'From which I infer that if anything in the arrangement of the room, the furniture, and so on, has been in the slightest degree disturbed, it must have been disturbed by you, yourself?'

'*I* disturb anything, M. le Commissaire?'

'If anybody searched the pockets of the defunct, searched the drawers of that table, anything there may be within the drawers—if anybody has abstracted money, valuables of any kind, documents of any sort whatever—that individual must be yourself, Benoît?'

'I myself, M. le Commissaire?'

'*Dame!*'

The Commissary shrugged his shoulders compassionately at Maître Benoît. From the regard full of a conscious worth which he launched at the rest of his auditors, he seemed to be seeking the approval first of M. Renaud—then of Mr. Toppin—next, of Mr. Herbert—finally of the corpse.

'But Madame Michon, the bed-ridden neighbour, can testify that I was not in this room at all, to say nothing of——'

'How can she testify that?'

'Because I was relating to her what had happened, including the visit of last evening. And I said, "I will relate all to M. le Commissaire." And so I would have done, if M. le Commissaire had not stopped me at almost the first word, which was about the visit, and had not gone away, after putting a seal upon the door.'

But Madame Michon is bed-ridden, stone deaf, and ninety years of age?'

'Ninety? Oh no, M. le Commissaire!'

'You said ninety. But we'll see about that. We'll address a few questions about you to Madame Michon. Hem! And stone-deaf, you said?'

'Oh no, M. le Commissaire—not stone-deaf! Hard of hearing, but not stone-deaf. How could I relate it to her, if she were stone-deaf? And as for ninety—you say ninety, as you say sixty, sixty-five, or seventy, it doesn't cost any more. You say those things as you say that persons are mad; you don't mean that they are mad, mad. Ninety? Oh no! M. le Commissaire must not treat me with rigour because I made a mistake in a lady's age: that is a case which might occur to persons of the best education, M. le Commissaire, almost every day. And stone-deaf? No; not stone-deaf; hard of hearing. It was because she was hard of hearing that I went into her apartment, which is next to this one, to relate the circumstances.'

'And you were engaged in that relation until my arrival?'

'The whole time—yes, M. le Commissaire. She has no

distractions, poor woman, and it interested her, though it was fatiguing to myself to shout like that. My wife even remarked, afterwards, upon my hoarseness, which——'

'So that you were not guarding this door at all?'

'I was not guarding this door, M. le Commissaire?'

'*Dame!*'

With that repetition of the expostulatory clincher, the gratified functionary took out of his pocket his green-and-gilt tasselled cigarette-case—not, presumably, the kind of case he himself would have purchased—not the kind of case, perhaps, that any masculine admirer would have offered him: the gift, no doubt, of some subjugated nymph, by the mighty frown and the mountainous self-esteem conquered. He gazed at the elegant little object with looks full of indulgence. She could not help it. There was every allowance to be made for her, there really was—for her as for the others. How could she possibly help it, *voyons!* Hem—hem! Ahem!—Aha! Hah! Ba—hem—hem! Hah—h—h!! Was he about to recount his prowess? monotonous legend!——

Vidi, vici. Ba-hem-hum! And then the theories. 'After the widest possible experience, my profession bringing me in contact with all classes of society, I can say without fear of contradiction that,' etc. 'If all these poetry-people who make poetry-books would only come to *me*, why *I* would tell them,' etc. 'There is no man who could save more lives than I could save, if only all these young and middle-aged, and elderly sighing swains who allow,' etc. 'What he should have done? Why didn't he come to *me? I* would have told him that, instead of,' etc. Hem! hem!—Ahah-h-h!—Ahem! Hah-h! 'That's all.' Type of the happiest man—out upon you, for a tedious knave! 'What I should have told him? Why——ahem! Aha-a!—They want to be impressed, the ladies do; they want you to be entitled to their respect: and what entitles you to their respect, and what impresses them is—Ho! Oho! Aha! There are two categories who apparently decline to be impressed by—Hem! Hah! Ahem!—and those are (1) The category that only wants to hear this music longer than the rest; and (2) The category that requires the genuflection to accompany this Ho! this Hah! this Hem! Ahem!—Listen'——

What can be the transgression which the majority of men must have committed towards the majority of women, that the latter should so mercilessly inflict upon the former this cosmopolitan type of bore who maps the female nature out for us, with Hem! Ahah! and trumpets his opinions at us? For, we do owe him to the feminine influence, this type of bore. To render him the justice which is only right and proper, he shows himself, as a general rule, not untruthful. The scalps may not be streaming from his belt, but the locks of hair, the gold-rimmed inkstands, and the silver dressing-cases—there they all are at home, in the museum, with now and then a pulpit-cushion, visible trophies of the Platonic—or otherwise—Hem! Hah! Ahah! Ho! AHEM! The weaknesses of those we love ought only to endear them to us; the weaknesses which, as a rule, are much less amiably rewarded are those of the persons who may chance to entertain for us the persistent sentiments which we feel quite positive we never can return. But, if there be discoverable, anywhere, sentiment, in flesh and blood, that *lusus naturæ* we have sometimes read about, the misogynist, he might enlist a large amount of sympathy amongst the members of his own sex by reminding them that to some feminine influence is invariably to be attributed this type of bore who blights masculine society.

No, it was not to be the anecdote of the tassels and the green and gilt—not this time. And yet green should be interpreted *Espérance*, whereby hangs a tale. Vanished, the looks full of indulgent commiseration. The owner of the case drew from it, thoughtfully, a cigarette.

'Not for the moment, I think, M. le Commissaire,' pronounced the gentle, soothing voice of M. Renaud—'presently.'

'Presently? Oh, *he* won't object—ha! ha!' Completed by a gesture, the jovial reference was to the corpse.

M. Renaud raised his chalk-white eyelids placidly, and lowered them again.

'If you will humour a caprice, M. le Commissaire——?'

'Oh, a caprice of *yours*, M. Renaud——' He restored the tasselled emblem to its fortunate resting-place. 'Ahem! Hah!—Well?' said he resuming his examination—'You were not guarding the door at all?'

'If M. le Commissaire insists——very well!' answered Benoît.

'But were you, or were you not? You were not?'

'I would not take upon myself to contradict M. le Commissaire; it would be unbecoming; I would not contradict him.'

'So that anybody might have come upstairs and entered this room, disturbed the furniture or abstracted valuables, subsequently to the departure of your nephew, and prior to my own arrival?'

Benoît's countenance lighted up with a beam of relief.

'Why, evidently, M. le Commissaire,' he exclaimed—'evidently—inasmuch as I was not guarding the door!' Benoît's relief developed into triumph, as, with a harmless expletive or two, he reiterated this response.

'Very well. Now look around you, at the furniture—and especially at that chair by the deceased.' The Commissary took breath, and recommenced. 'Ahem, hem! Does anything in the room appear to be changed from what you noticed when you first entered with your nephew?'

'Nothing, monsieur, I should say. About the chair, I can be positive to M. le Commissaire. It was lying just like that.'

'Where did he get that rope—the rope he has hanged himself with?'

'I have always seen it here, since he came. It was knotted round and round that big box, when he arrived to us. He said one day, in a joke, while I was arranging the apartment in his presence, he being then in bed, feeble, and recovering from his fever—"M. Benoît," he said, like that, "there is a rope on the floor which will do to hang the doctor with as soon as I get well!" "Ah, *Fichtre!*" I said, like that—"hang all the rest of them, *Fichtre!*" I said—"but not this one, for he has cured you of your fever, M. Allen," I said. "And that's just the reason, M. Benoît," he said, like that—"it's the reason I would hang him!" But he laughed, and I knew he did not mean it; and so I said, "Ah, *bigre!*" I said, like that—"pay the doctor, don't hang him, *bigre!*—hang yourself, M. Allen, it's a short way," and we both laughed, although he was yet feeble.'

'Therefore, this morning you were not particularly surprised at the discovery?'

'Not particularly, when you come to look at it, afterwards. He's not the first who's taken the same road, for the same reason.'

'What reason?'

Benoît opened his lips to reply, but checked himself.

'What reason?' urged his questioner—'come!' The Champenois repeated vaguely, as if carried away by a different train of thought—'What reason, M. le Commissaire?'

'Don't lose yourself in the clouds! I am questioning you.'

'Did you not know, M. le Commissaire? A *chagrin d'amour*—that's what it was. The doctor told us that he spoke about it in his wanderings of the mind. He used to keep on saying that he would throw his gold into a gulf, and compel himself to begin life over again amidst poor people. Ah, but he didn't want to live, which was a pity, for it's difficult to let rooms in the Rue de Caen. "What do you think I thought the rope was, on the floor?" he said to me, again, the very next morning after. "I used to see it, sometimes, when I was ill," he said, like that, "and I used to think it was three or four snakes. They wanted to attack me, to encircle me, and I wanted them to attack me, too; but none of you who were at the bedside would allow them to approach, and, as for me, although I tried, I could not get up to go to them!'

'That very rope?'

'That very rope. I recognise it well enough. It was always knotted like that. There were snakes, he said, that wanted to kill him. Ah, they've killed him, the snakes; it was a fatality, as my wife said to my nephew, Jean, after his return with M. le Commissaire. But, then, as I told the bed-ridden neighbour, Madame Michon—"*Saperlipopette*, Madame Michon," I said, "you can't open your wounds without losing your blood; after the visit of last evening, we might have expected this," I said, just like that.'

The attentive functionary paused, transferred his gaze to the exsanguinous visage of M. Renaud, and breathed a bass preparatory 'Hem—m—m!'

'If M. le Commissaire would like to interrogate my nephew Jean——' suggested Benoît, taking a step or two towards the door.

'Can he tell us anything about the visit?'

'No; because he went to the warehouse at five o'clock, which was more than half an hour before the visit.'

'And your wife?'

'She was out, buying for our dinner.'

'So that, at the moment of the visit, you were alone in the lodge, Benoît?'

'Well, saving the respect of M. le Commissaire, how could I help that, my nephew Jean being not there, and my wife being out?'

'What were these visitors?'

'Why, as I told M. le Commissaire——'

'You have told me nothing.'

'I do assure M. le Commissaire that I did tell him this morning.'

'You told me nothing.'

'Madame Michon can prove——'

'Madame Michon is deaf.'

'Oh, not so deaf as all that, either!'

'Well, then—these gentlemen, these visitors?'

'They were not gentlemen, M. le Commissaire—the two visitors.'

'What were they then—Auvergnats?'

The questioner kept his eye fixed steadily on M. Renaud.

'*Ben*, M. le Commissaire—they were—they were—one was—*ben*, they were ladies——' M. Benoît, gazing at the plaster walls, the arched ceiling, the uncarpeted floor of the comfortless garret, might have been waking in captivity from a dream of Indian wilds. 'They were of the best, oh, assuredly the best, best world. And one of them—of a splendour and a beauty—oh, a richness and a radiance——'

No one responded; no one exhibited the surprise and curiosity which Benoît manifestly considered his due. They could not have been following him, then? That individual whom they called the *g-r-rand Simplice*—that M. Renaud? *Oh, la, la!*—why he had no more vitality in him, no more intelligence, than some stone figure which the sculptor, who had carved him out, had attired in a suit of his own clothes. *Ben, merci!* And even the Commissary, that *beau vainqueur*—what could he find of so much interest in Renaud, *cet empaillé?* The Commissary was beginning to look vexed; time to take leave. And the others—those two foreigners—*'Cré nom d'un chien*, what idiots they all were, all men-

foreigners! One of these two had sat down on the bed again, and was staring at the floor; and the other foreigner was staring at the other who was staring at the floor.

'A loveliness unparalleled, it was,' continued M. Benoît, in a tone of emphatic protest. 'And a figure and a richness —oh, the luxuriant figure!'

'In short, a handsome woman,' said the Commissary roughly. 'What of that, Benoît?'

'I looked up, and I saw her standing in the doorway of the lodge. I did not believe it could be that these eyes were faithful. The other spoke to me, but I did not hear the other. This one looked at me because I did not answer —and then, I believe, she would have moved into the lodge.' Benoît broke off abruptly. His gaze once more swept the lugubrious surroundings. 'It was a magic. I saw myself young again, a peasant in our country—the Champagne. It was the Champenois sun that I saw again —the sun, my village, and a *beau gars*—yes, I myself—the *beau gars* of the village! and I saw the Champenoises at the grape harvest. The other spoke and spoke—that brought me back. "*Holà, père Benoît!*" I said to myself; "you bade your village farewell twenty odd years ago! You old twenty years' drudge—in a city—*père Benoît*—for you the vision of the Champenoises in autumn days!—for you the sun and wine and dances of the peasant in your youth! *Vieux fou!*—Concierge, Rue Caïn!—Galley slave!" That other brought me back.'

'*Hé*, Benoît! A real Champenois sunstroke. Hem! Hum! Ahah-h-h!' The Commissary strode across the room, backwards and forwards. 'And so you jump to the conclusion that this visit and the *chagrin d'amour* belong to the same history?'

'Because the portrait he asked for as soon as he got well of the fever was her portrait, to call it a portrait—but not beautiful enough!"

'Did she speak in French?'

'I did not hear her speak at all. The other asked all the questions. The other was much older. The questions asked? Oh, she did not ask whether he lived here; she asked whether he was then at home.'

'The one who spoke to you—had she a foreign accent?'

'I suppose not. It sounded like the accent of any of us;

only there was distinction in the way she spoke: but sharp —clack, clack, clack—and stern. As for jumping to conclusions, you would have jumped there yourself, M. le Commissaire, saving the respect of your high functions, if you had seen the defunct when he came downstairs, a few minutes after the arrival of these ladies. *Ah, bigre!* I wish M. le Commissaire had been there.'

'He came downstairs after their arrival?'

'A few minutes after. And that was the last time I set eyes on him in life.'

M. Benoît paused to survey the corpse.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE Commissary waited likewise. The Commissary also surveyed the corpse.

'Ahah!' he growled—'Oho,—hem! And that was the last time you set eyes up him, *notre particulier!* The farewell visit by the lady, not to be lacking in good manners—"I am to be united to Another;" entreaties by the defunct; useless; despairs; farewell; be happy; and then—*O la!*'

A plain case, by the demonstration. Suicide. Why had the deceased neglected to step round and see our worldly wiseacre, the experienced Bore? The Bore would have related his own victories—per annum, fifty-two: at need would have produced that which is unimpeachable, the evidence documentary.

'I haven't seen the features, yet,' resumed Benoît; 'but they can't be worse than they were in life. Ah, he wasn't engaging. When he first came here, you wouldn't have noticed that he was one way or the other; but after the illness—ah, *Dieu!* what an ugly fellow, *ce long merlan-là!* What business had a fellow like that to have a *chagrin d'amour* about a woman of that splendour and that beauty? It's well done, what he's done. That will teach him—I mean to say, that would have taught him, at least, it might teach him, if it could be—well, what's done is done; and why should foreigners come into France at all? although he might have stayed with us, was it *our* fault? Continually he gave us the hundred sous, and letting is a very difficult thing now in the Rue Caïn!'

'The last time you saw this man in life, then, was yester-

day, towards six p.m., a few minutes after the arrival of these mysterious ladies; one of whom'—sneered the questioner—'you would have us think to be so wondrously marvellous?'

'I wish M. le Commissaire had been in the lodge with me, just to see! Oh, the radiance—the loveliness—the splendour! No wonder the defunct was all broken and strange when he came down. "M. Benoît," he said—ten years older all at once he looked—"owch-an-rowch-an-rahch-an-raitch-an-rowch," he said to me in his own language, because, don't you see, in the moment of the agitation, he forgot to speak in French; "owch-an-rowch—oh, *pardon*, M. Benoît," he said—and then he went on to tell me that he wanted—I don't know what—to hire or to buy furniture for this visit of these ladies. "Isn't your furniture good enough?" I said like that. "No, M. Benoît, neither my furniture, nor my fortune, nor the whole world." Well, that was a response from him that I did not half approve of. "Those who don't find the world good enough," I said, "can get out of it." "I find the world quite good enough, M. Benoît," he said; "don't be offended; what I ask you to do is not for *me*." "There are some people in this world," I said, "who are all for *frime* and *fla-fla*, all for appearances, and for *épate*, and want to make a show of being much more than they are!" He did not reply to that. Ah, *bigre!* it silenced him. A fellow like that, to pretend to the favour of such a radiance! If he had seemed to have his great fortune still, it would have been different. Gold against beauty, as my wife said afterwards, is radiance for radiance, which is equal, as she says, all the world over. But a fellow that only gives you the hundred *sous* out of *fla-fla!* He went up our stairs slowly, I can assure M. le Commissaire. I didn't see him again until this morning, when I was with my nephew from Montreuil.'

The speaker surveyed the corpse inquisitively, as his questioner still strode to and fro. The right hand of the defunct, twisted, and apparently a little swollen—that right hand had been lifted last night to clasp the handrail of their dingy staircase as the defunct had plodded upwards, away out of his view. The same hand she had perhaps touched with the finger-tips of a perfumed glove. The glove removed, perhaps he had with that same dead right hand,

only last evening, when bidding her adieu, touched her bare fingers—*he*, that miserable foreigner, 'owch-an-rowch-an-rahch-an'—*ça!* Why should he have done this, after all? Better than he by far had waited for their deaths patiently. She might have returned here, that vision from the hot days of his peasant youth. What was she who, by her presence, by her look, by breathing the same air, could efface twenty years of prison-life between high walls that mocked you with their false pretence of not enclosing you, Champenois, wasting and crushing you, helpless and hopeless? what was she who told you, in a vision, that the twenty years were nothing, that the mud and grayness were not true, that June or August did not mean the parching dust of labyrinthine, suffocating streets?

It was a magic. Would she not come again to their dark stifling lodge, where in the dirt and damp the hungry town-rats ran about at night—oh, why had she ever come, if she should never come again to him and say, 'Champenois, the sun and wine-fumes of your country linger in your veins yet: it is not true that you left your village: you are still the *beau gars* of the ruddy cheeks, the white teeth, and the curling hair; the best dancer, the best wrestler, the adroit poacher amongst them all; *allons*, Champenois, there is a miser to be murdered——'

'Tell us how long the visitors remained—and then you can go.'

Yes, he had seen her once before. On her head a silver diadem; upon her flowing black robe, silver stars; black as the night her loose robe; more soft and shining than the silver stars, her dark eyes; her long loose flowing hair black as the night. A white arm, and a silver wand; the dim glades of an unearthly forest; dark forms gliding rhythmically to such strains of music as no peasant ever dreamed of in even his haunted vales; a blaze of light; clatter; shouts; bouquets; unrest; the peasant's first glimpse of a fairyland across a row of footlights, his first glimpse of the great city after dusk—Paris, with its promise to young peasants, *beaux gars*, breathlessly arrived from the far village: twenty odd years had passed, but it was she: not the good nor the bad fairy—neither defeated nor exultant—Queen of both fairies, and of all the mortals—the Queen of Night.

'Well?'

She was to return no more, now—no more—because that—that—that *saleté-là* had died! Animal! Idiot—Imbecile—Dog! Wrench his nails from his fingers—rend him and torture him! *Arrachez-moi les ong' à ça!* Carrion!

'Benoît, Benoît! Why, what's the matter with the booby? Answer the question.'

'I cannot answer you any more.'

'Oh, cannot you, indeed? Now, then, make your mind up!'

Benoît, for all response, folded his arms sullenly and glared at the suspended corpse.

'Well?'

'Let *that* answer, if it can,' muttered Benoît; 'I have done.'

The amazed functionary pulled up short. 'Another madman? First, a nuisance with his loquacity, and then——' He raised his hand and let it drop. It fell so heavily on Benoît's shoulder that the Champenois shook under the sudden shock. 'Oho! Hah-h! Ahem-m! We shall see.'

His arm flew upwards, and he saw the Champenois crouching in front of him, with hate and revolt in his convulsed visage. 'Attention!' roared the functionary, '*'Cr-r-rédié!*' As he stepped back, Benoît crept forward. The twenty years odd were obliterated in that instant. The Champenois was for an instant again on the village-green, or at the fair, the country wrestler measuring himself against a more colossal adversary, and confident of his power to fracture skulls!

'Benoît!' A new note of command rang out. M. Renaud had risen to his feet. The waxen eyelids were no longer lowered. His clouded blue-gray eyes, traversed by a mote of deep amber, were wide open. He was gazing at Benoît.

The Champenois glanced at the speaker defiantly, looked away, and looked again. His demoniacal scowl relaxed. His outstretched arms fell by his side; his body straightened.

'My fine fellow,' fumed the instrument of the law—'violence! disrespect to the uniform! A dose of prison *régime* may calm your nerves.' He strode towards the door.

'M. le Commissaire!' It was M. Renaud who thus interposed, and the voice was clear and strong, devoid of all colloquial gentleness. 'My compliments, monsieur, upon

your capable examination. But it has been informal and irregular, and this you will be the first to acknowledge.'

'Oh, a case of suicide——' Retracing his steps, the angered official glowered at Benoît, who in his own turn was pacing feverishly to and fro. 'As for our worthy maître there, he needs a lodging in the cells, to learn respect.'

'The cells! prison! *Je m'en*——' growled the Champenois. 'I know what is prison.'

He struck at his head with his clenched hands, and then grasped at the level plaster wall as though to tear it down.

'Watch Renaud, sir!' murmured Detective Toppin to Mr. Herbert, who indeed had lost no detail of the scene.

'Come here, Benoît!' said M. Renaud.

'Why should I come to you?'

The Champenois remained close to the wall. He muttered to himself, and held his face averted.

'Turn this way, Benoît.'

'Why should I turn that way?'

'Because it pleases me.'

'It pleases *me* to look another way. It pleases me to look at M. le Commissaire.'

'You will look me in the eyes, Benoît, because you are an honest man.'

'He an honest man! Ha!' broke forth the indignant functionary, posed, with really admirable effect, near the garret casement which faced the window obscured by the corpse. 'A rascal! An insolent, loquacious——'

M. Renaud threw up his left arm for silence.

'Come, Benoît!'

'You shall not order me! You shall not—who are you to order me—if I say I will not turn, I will not!'

Nor did he turn, immediately, towards M. Renaud. Instead of obeying, in fact, he clutched more fiercely still at the plaster surface of the perpendicular wall—more fiercely—nervously.

'I will wait until you can give me your attention, Benoît,' continued M. Renaud, his gaze fixed upon the Champenois. At the sound of the voice Benoît spread both arms out wide, and swept the coarse plaster surface with his hands like a blind man seeking frantically an exit.

'Out of his wits, the animal! Had a sunstroke in his youth, I should imagine!' The comment proceeded from

the functionary posed with such admirable effect by the window. Benoît at once turned in the speaker's direction, and began to move eagerly towards him, groping with his trembling fingers along the wall. 'Yes, try this tumble, idiot!' added the functionary; 'it's a good way out for you; the street's below.'

'Now, Benoît—I have waited long enough!'

The Champenois, who had just reached the angle of the attic window, stopped, ceased in the restless movement of his hands, and wheeled round, looking straight before him: not at M. Renaud—past M. Renaud—past Mr. Herbert and Detective Toppin: directly at the corpse.

'Come and answer a few questions quietly, Benoît!'

'If I come to you,' answered the Champenois, pronouncing his words with apparent difficulty, 'it is only because I am quite willing to come to you.'

'That is all, of course. You are quite willing.'

Benoît transferred his gaze from the dark figure which obscured the opposite window, to the walls on either side, the arched ceiling, the rafters, and then, hesitatingly, to the figure of M. Renaud. The latter was awaiting the glance, caught it, and, as their eyes met, held his man. The Commissary might fume and 'Hem! Hem! Ahem-m-m!' now, to his heart's content. Benoît turned his back upon him, and marched tamely up to M. Renaud. The great Simplice had remained, since rising to his feet, in the lounging attitude which was his habit. His countenance was unchanged—still inexpressive, immobile. Authority had rung out in the suddenly altered accents of his voice, but now—since the last phrase or two—he had relapsed into his ordinary soothing gentleness of enunciation.

'See how frightened they all are of him, sir,' whispered Toppin; 'isn't it strange what's in a name!'

To Mr. Herbert it seemed that, of the three spectators, he alone fully comprehended. He had looked on with doubt and wonderment. Benoît stood fronting them, not much more distant from himself than from Simplice Renaud. The febrile outburst had left no trace; the convulsed visage was now calm, almost beatified; the bearing was submissive; Benoît had been miraculously transformed. As he noted this and went on, not doubting, but wondering, Mr. Herbert all at once felt himself struck by . . . felt that he had been

struck all at once by—what was it? A sort of paralysis? Mental paralysis? It was gone—gone because he willed that it should go. But the apprehension of a frightful disaster rushed into his mind. The anguish of a future calamity chilled the blood in every vein, and weighed his heart with iron. Dread of a calamity? Of what calamity? Dread for whom?

'Why, Benoît, my man—you have had a little *crise de nerfs*, have you not?' said M. Renaud.

'Yes; a *crise de nerfs*.'

'But you feel much better now—your old self again?'

'Yes, better again.'

'And you make your apologies to M. le Commissaire for having been wanting in respect?'

'I make my apologies to M. le Commissaire for having been wanting in respect.'

'And you can look me in the face steadily, because you are an honest man!'

'I can look you in the face steadily.'

'And when I tell you that I know you are concealing something from us, you know that I am right?'

'I know that you are right.'

'And what have you concealed?'

'What I took this morning.'

'Where is it?'

'In the breast-pocket of my blouse.'

'Give it me.'

Without hesitating, the Champenois passed his hand between the folds of the blouse he wore, and, from an inner breast-pocket, produced a flat oblong packet, loosely enveloped in white paper. M. Renaud lifted a corner of the white covering, and glanced at the enclosure.

'Why did you take this?" he asked, readjusting the folded paper.

'I wanted to keep it.'

'You came into the room for it, when your nephew had gone for M. le Commissaire?'

'Yes.'

'You have been interrogated by M. le Commissaire. Have you kept back anything which you feel you ought to have told us?'

'Nothing.'

'Do you think that anyone came into the room this morning while you were away from the door?'

'I do not think that anyone came into the room.'

'Do you know if valuables were kept here by the defunct?'

'I don't know.'

'You remember that there were two visitors here last evening. M. le Commissaire was questioning you about them when you were overtaken by a *crise de nerfs*. How long did they stay?'

'Perhaps an hour and a half; I don't know.'

'Tell us all that remains to be told.'

'It was quite dusk when they came down. They were veiled. I followed them, at a distance. They turned into the Rue Vachet, where a cab was waiting. They got into the cab, and drove away. I wanted to know the address they gave, but I was too far from them. That is all.'

'Now I shall keep this packet.'

'You will keep that packet.'

'You give it me freely!'

'I give it you freely.'

'And you will remember, presently and always, that you gave it me.'

'I will remember that I gave it you.'

'Without regret, you will remember it.'

'Without regret.'

'Very well.' M. Renaud deposited the packet on the table behind him. 'Now, Benoît,' he resumed, advancing a step, 'I think you are in full possession of your faculties again. You have altogether recovered from that little *crise de nerfs*.' He touched the other's forehead and temples. The Champenois started at the contact. 'My man,' said M. Renaud, in a tone of sympathy, 'you have been, I positively declare, within two finger-breadths of falling ill!—why your forehead is quite moist with a cold perspiration. You had a little attack, you know, and you were disrespectful to M. le Commissaire. He forgives you, however, and you are grateful to him, are you not?'

Benoît passed his hand over his eyes and stared about him suspiciously.

'Yes; I am grateful,' he answered.

'Be off then, *mon brave*!'

'Am I to——'

'You are to take yourself off—decamp! Before going downstairs, tell the policeman at the door to come in.'

'But this Madame Michon?' objected the Commissary.

'The case is genuine,' answered M. Renaud. 'An old tenant of the house. Aged and invalid. Has been bedridden for the past five or six years. Why, I know your quarter almost as well as you know it yourself, M. le Commissaire!'

The Champenois proffered a mechanical salute. *'A'r'voir! Messieu—dames,'* said he vacantly. A moment more, and he had gone. The door had opened and closed, and in his place stood the policeman.

'Oho! Ahah-h! Oho!' muttered the Commissary, who had sauntered to the table, and was examining the packet.

'While you were posted on duty outside that door, previously to our arrival,' demanded M. Renaud of the newcomer—'did anyone seek to enter, or to question you?'

'No one,' was the reply.

'Has anything whatever occurred, calling for remark?'

'Nothing whatever.'

'Oho! Hem! Ahem!' The interested official glanced at the 'defunct' with more respect than he had ever entertained for M. Allen, otherwise Allan Ridgeway Garth, in life.

'I think there are no further questions to be asked?' said M. Renaud, addressing the official at his side.

'I think not,' was the reply; 'everything clear: suicide—with this'—tapping the oblong packet—'as the explanation. From the outset, I saw that there were no suspicious circumstances. This, however'—handing the packet to his colleague—'invested the occurrence with a certain interest.' He watched M. Renaud as the latter again inspected the enclosure.

'Benoît!' called M. Renaud loudly.

They heard a faint sound of retreating footsteps. The policeman sprang towards the door.

'Useless,' immediately observed M. Renaud to him. 'Needless! That is of no moment. I shall desire M. le Commissaire to instruct you to return to your post, and to continue on duty until the body is removed for the autopsy, in the usual course. I presume you will then affix the seals, M. le Commissaire?'

'Pending application by the heirs or next friend, for what may be here.'

Following the policeman to the threshold, and with his own hand carefully fastening the door, M. Renaud paused as if plunged in uncertainty, or as if intently listening. It might have been, however, that a different test absorbed his attention; motionless, near the threshold, he directed at the corpse a fixed regard which would have formed a suitable preliminary to a cross-examination.

'No,' at length summed up M. Renaud, for the benefit of his auditors—'you will be unable to detect the presence of the drug. This door has been too frequently opened; and from that window there would be an immediate current of air. And the lapse of several hours would have rendered the fumes hardly distinguishable, even when Benoît entered for the first time this morning.'

He swung on his heel, lounged to the far window, and lounged back again. The ill-disguised malice on the Commissary's countenance died away. He was astonished, and betrayed his astonishment; and he was vexed that he should be astonished. With Renaud, that habitual lowering of the blanched, shell-like eyelids might be affectation, trick, mannerism—what you would; but at this moment it did positively seem as though Simplice Renaud were engaged in the most searching scrutiny of what lay underneath the floor he walked on.

'Suicide?' continued M. Renaud. He halted opposite his colleague. 'Suicide? Then who has placed that rope around his neck?'

'Who?' gasped his colleague.

'Yes—who?'

'Himself—*pardi!*'

'Your Englishman of the Rue Caïn was dead before he was strung up there—before our friend was strung up to that cross-beam, he was dead!'

CHAPTER IX.

Mr. Toppin could not recall one instance in which Simplice Renaud, pledging his credit upon a matter such as the prospects of an inquiry, had been proved to have been wrong.

But it was a long lane that had no turning, reflected Mr. Toppin; the pitcher would go once too often to the well; to err was human, as old Colonel Sampson used to say—though why the old Colonel should have habitually added, 'to forgive, divine,' was more than Mr. Toppin could make out. He did not quite see how the land lay, as between the Commissary and Simplice. If the latter should eventually be for 'hushing-up' this case, would the former subside into the silence which gives consent? How much were the parties in this matter willing to expend? How much would be left for T. T.? He did not wish to be presented with inquiry offices that had not been established 'on a liberal basis.' As to the nature of the square, or rather oblong packet, Mr. Toppin had ventured upon one of his shrewd guesses.

'Look at the chair overturned near the deceased,' continued M. Renaud. His monotonous tones and unmoved manner might have befitted the exordium of a perfunctory lecture in a class-room occupied perennially by beginners. 'How did the chair come into that position? Not through any conceivable movement of the deceased.'

'He mounted on the chair to attach the rope,' protested the Commissary—'ahem! He knotted the rope around his neck, and then kicked the chair over.'

'If the deceased had kicked the chair over backwards, as we might imagine at first sight, it must have fallen this way, that way, that way, or that way.' M. Renaud placidly illustrated his exposition of the physical laws by dragging a similar chair forward from its place near the wall, and by overturning it three or four times, with different degrees of violence. 'A solid, cumbrous piece of furniture of such a shape as this could not possibly have been thrown over by the deceased himself, so as to fall into that position, at that distance—although no doubt the distance is slight enough—from the body. Has the chair been disturbed at all? Was it moved from its place by Benoît or by his companion? Not by design, I think. Inadvertently? Perhaps. And now we arrive at the consideration of the cause of death.'

The inferences were but too clearly indicated in advance. Monstrous though they might be, these conclusions would be invested with an almost unimpeachable authority. Mr. Herbert recognised the peril. It was no more than the

danger which, after all, he had anticipated; but what he had not, certainly, been able to take into account was the feasibility of any actual demonstration that the death of Allan Garth had been deliberately contrived by others. Others? There could be none, as 'others,' anyone would say, but those who would profit by his immediate disappearance. Facing the situation at its worst, Mr. Herbert at once assumed the identity of the two visitors. They were, Andréa Bertraux and—yes, it must be faced—Evelyn herself. Imprudent, fatally imprudent! So long as he had remained in ignorance of the subject of Garth's whereabouts and condition, he had refused to close his eyes to the most formidable of all the hypotheses. Now that, by the action of a third party, the same hypothesis was brought vividly home to him, stripped of its ostensible extravagance, he refused altogether to admit that it could be regarded in any other light than that of extravagance of the most absurd, the wildest, order—the extravagance, too, of a merely superficial deduction by a dangerous man who could control destinies.

Their struggle now began, thought he; for the peril was real. Were not the forces too unequal? Simplice Renaud disposed of the entire machinery of the French police; what he considered to be his duty he would no doubt perform unhesitatingly and with despatch; a man like Renaud—let us render him his due, said Mr. Herbert—the man before him, M. Renaud, was not to be silenced by a bribe. The forces were unequal. A resource which on occasion might accomplish more than the entire machinery of the French police, apparently lay within the reach of Simplice Jean Louis Renaud — apparently. Oh no — myths! He must have misread, misconstrued, the final passages of Benoît's examination. The surroundings; his own incertitude, his own anxiety; the presence of the inanimate form that this time yesterday had breathed, could see, and could think, as he himself was now breathing, seeing, thinking: the lifeless figure which had been united to himself by an unrevealed, but more than ordinary, bond of friendship: the grotesque and sable effigy which almost irritated him because it never changed its pose, because it never—ha! he was arguing like a sempstress or a footman, or a Dervish of the *Beau!*—because it had not dropped into a commanding attitude? be-

cause it had not died with grace and dignity? a creditable train of meditation, truly! and yet he, also—shame! Oh, shame! shame!—how had he also the heart to note whatever in those details might be risible—how could he, turning his head away, permit a farcical suggestion to invade his mind—or a burlesque resemblance?—well, influences there were which had unduly gained upon him; and no doubt their effect had been enhanced by cultivated mysteriousness on the part of Simplice Renaud, a strictly average creature, posing for the Sphinx.

'It happens with surprising frequency in suicides,' went on M. Renaud, 'that the persons who destroy themselves will be found to have devoted much time to the question of the aspect they are to offer, after death.'

The speaker was taking up the very thought which at that instant occurred to his mute critic, Mr. Herbert. The latter, struck by the coincidence, listened for some consequent allusion to himself and to the interests he was now to do his utmost to protect. One priceless advantage resided with himself, reflected Mr. Herbert. Before the identity of these two ladies could be established by his opponents, he would have provided for their departure from the country. Their address in Paris he would ascertain by telegram to the firm, and to the private residence of the Ormond-Weirs. When once they were beyond the reach of the legal machinery which could be put in motion by Simplice Renaud, all the risks of inconvenience, persecution, scandal, and so forth, which they had imprudently incurred, would have been lightened or removed; and—inconvenience, possible persecution, scandal, and so forth, constituted the sole risks—the sole risks, of course—which they would have incurred by their imprudence. The sole risks?

M. Renaud continued, in his level tones:

'How this may be, in general, with the compatriots of the deceased, I cannot pretend to utter an opinion; but, in my own experience, there is the fairly common fact, that, unless the suicides should be well advanced in years, they will have left indications of a desire to look either sentimentally interesting, or impressive, or dramatic—of a desire, at any rate, to avoid presenting any appearance that might be allied to the ridiculous or to the grotesque—when they are discovered, after death. It cannot matter to them, you

would say; yet, so it often is. In the case we have to deal with at this moment, death was not caused by hanging. On that point there can be no question—M. le Commissaire differs from me? Doubtless, M. le Commissaire is well acquainted with the normal appearances in cases of death by hanging — no?—yes? — very well, then — yes! I would invite him, therefore, first of all, in the case which we have now to deal with, to inspect the features of the corpse.'

The doubting official started forward, and strode across the floor. His movement was hasty and violent, and with his shoulder he jostled the suspended figure roughly. To the horror of at least one amongst the three onlookers, the corpse swung round towards them. . . .

. . . The corpse had swung far round, paused—*looked*—swung back again, swung again towards them, back once more, again towards them, slowly, slowly away. It settled once more, slowly, slowly, into the position from which it had been disturbed; again, the long, dark, motionless figure recalled the similitude so aptly applied to Allan Garth in life by ladies and gentlemen of high spirits and a quick sense of humour—the image, namely, of the scarecrow.

It was an idealized likeness, however, of the Garth whom he had known—this featured asceticism. The corpse had faced him a second time, and a third—and, almost for the fourth time, faced him. It was Garth himself, but strangely older: aged out of all proportion to the actual lapse of—hardly years—months. The physiognomy of a fanatic, a visionary, a madman? Why, these about him were but clowns!

'And I, myself,' raged Mr. Herbert silently, unable during those few moments to avert his gaze from the wasted countenance, untroubled at last, illumined at last, 'what have I been myself, when I have feared that the anger of this man could be roused against the woman he loved—what have I been but an arrogant and biased judge, yielding to imaginary terrors in the spirit of an urchin—with the unfairness of a woman in the wrong?'

While the rest of them, reckoning their time contentedly by the calendar, had lived through months, this man had lived through long and terrible years. He bore the traces of those years, long years and unnatural. A stronger-minded or a busier man could not have aged like this, commented Mr.

Herbert; chiding himself an instant later for the implied animadversion — stronger-minded? Yes, a good, sound, popular verdict; in adopting that verdict he would be following worthily at the heels of any mob, and shouting with them worthily, 'Stronger-minded!' The luscious colloquialism of the busy, shallow, hard, or selfish man; the venomous rebuke of the uneasily self-accusing woman; the scoff of the vain boy. And he himself could have passed the same verdict, in the same spirit of superior strength, not many weeks ago—not many days, indeed, before he had learnt the true story of Garth's disappearance. The notions which he had early formed as to the virile self-respect had undergone a modification which was none the less profound for being insensible.

Mr. Herbert, sir—a word with you. On the whole, you do not seem to have been born under an unlucky star. Much was in your favour. At the same time—and this is what we wish to say to you in private—you cannot be passed off upon the reader as a hero. You were not heroic, nor, as the sequel proved, discriminating. Only in the glowing page of Mistress Lucia Lurid could you have been turned into a type of hero; and delineated in that page you would have been neither the Mr. Herbert who has lived, nor any other Mr. Herbert at all recognisable by his fellow-men.

Perhaps you might have preferred the glowing page of Mistress Lurid? Let us hope not. For, to begin with, you would have had to get rid of something of your sensibility, and to put up with a smaller dose of sense. But, there you would have been the hero—'as the saying is.' You shall choose.

Mistress Lurid would have executed faithful portraits of you, as you appeared: (1) with the sunlight upon your temples and on your auburn hair; (2) in suppressed anger, with swollen veins like knotted cords; (3) smoking your cigarette (the poses with the cigarette are various: but you would usually emit the tobacco-smoke in rings, 'the ebullitio, the whiff,' and if you were walking down a Roman street, the rings would encircle and enclose you, as you walked, for which example of a Japanese dexterity your success in the vocation of circus juggler would be assured); (4) with a wet towel round your forehead, in the morning, and in the act of absorbing brandy and soda-water; (5) looking longingly

from liquid eyes a look like lava; (6) saying in a thick undertone (this is the most approved good Lurid language) whilst your hungry lips sought hers—'Darling—darling—oh——' no, we leave this unfinished—we can't complete the passage—but it's so well known that——!——down to the cue for the stage-business noted, on the page that glows, as 'nestling;' (7) rescuing; (8) 'thrashing a bargee;' (9)—for a ninth—knocking down poor Toppin, 'with a blow that would have felled an ox.' Mistress Lurid, who directs and develops the romantic tendencies of young ladies taking her upon trust, would have introduced you to so many of the nicest people in the world that you might well be pardoned for preferring their high prophetess and their society. But let us look into a few plain facts. Let us touch upon a few of these considerations in a practical kind of way, as men of business in the simplest terms.

Now, logically, to you Mistress Lurid should prefer Toppin: if Toppin could be clothed by your own tailor. Because T. T. really does deserve the encomium of the portly cook he was acquainted dearly with, in Belgrave Square; he is an 'andsome man, Toppin is—yea, truly—it is well said, in faith; good phrases are surely, and ever were, very commendable; and it is well said, indeed, too. T. T. lacks a little instruction in the art of liquefying and lava-fying his really handsome eyes; but of other arts he is past master. We all remember how he won 'events' in the Police Athletic Sports. He carries his height and weight with perfect grace; he passed the police standard years ago, whilst still growing. As for the thrashings—whether of bargees, bricklayers, butchers, blackguards, or bruisers—which would be expected from you in the Lurid page, Mr. George Herbert, why, as you well know, you could execute none of them, whilst Toppin could execute most of them very neatly, excepting always in the case of the bruiser who should be anywhere near his weight (Mr. Toppin classes with the heavies). The fighting Lurid hero seldom fails to exhibit the novice's sweet innocence upon such points as weight, condition, aptitude, and 'previous performances of the men.' Now Toppin would have satisfied a really exacting expert.

Then, as to the tricksome trifling with tobacco-smoke, clearly the indispensable accomplishment of heroes in

romance, Toppin can do more at that than any half-dozen of the Lurid swash-bucklers. The latter could not even smoke his rank tobacco. Look you, Toppin, in the hero's gorgeous 'den'—the apartment of the Lurid bachelor hero always is his 'den'—shall outdo the Lurid hero in every one of his exploits, with dumb-bells, Indian clubs, the sabre, single-stick, and the nicotian cloud. Rings that do envelop the Roman hero, as that Roman hero prances in Roman streets! Why, Toppin shall form the five letters of the name, 'L-u-c-i-a,' out of a single volume of tobacco-smoke, puffed upwards into the air. And he will run, jump, put the weight, play at skittles, wrestle, or spar (for points, or to a finish) with any of the Lurid heroes that 'would like to make a match for an object of value.' The words are Toppin's own. His deposit has been forwarded to the office of a sporting newspaper. 'As many as choose can come on,' says Toppin eagerly; 'I can get fit in no time. I'll forfeit the amateur status. There's my deposit; if they mean business, let them cover it!' There was just one other point which a friend referred to in his talk with Toppin. The friend told him of a Lurid modern, who, clad in velvet, went down to the ferry at eventide and carolled. It was so sweet that all Nature hushed to listen. It was so strong and sweet, the singing voice of this modern gentleman in velvet shorts, that a maiden at her casement, in the next village but two, heard the voice, recognised the melody, and listened, with all Nature, to the syllables. Toppin says he will make a match with the gentleman in question, if an amateur, for any object of value. He will back himself to make his voice travel a greater distance, and to sing for a greater length of time, without intermission, provided always that the gentleman will make the match in good old English ballads. 'Did you ever hear me sing "John Barleycorn"? No? Ah, you should hear me sing "John Barleycorn" and "Simon the Cellarer,"' concluded Toppin—'and I can do "The Death of Nelson" with any amateur that's going. Sing? I'll sing his head off, for a gold chronometer! Velvet shorts! Stockings! I don't know who the gentleman may be, but you put me into the clothes, sir, and I'll show against him for any object of value. Sing? What do you think of *this* note, sir—baa—a—a—

and *this*—baw—aw—aw? Bah—hah—ha—he—*he!*' Too high, Toppin.

So that, Mr. Herbert, it becomes doubly impossible to present you as a 'hero.' You are not in real life what the Mistress Lurids would have made you; and, were you actually in real life the personage they would have made of you, all obligations of consistency would bind us to depose you for T. T. You cannot possibly play the hero, 'as the saying is,' because the narrative happens to be a narrative from real life: and so we answer those who think that, ere this, Mr. Herbert, you should have been figuring, somehow, within certain of the clauses as above enumerated—1, 2, and 3, to 9.

If we had been dealing with, not facts, but fiction; if we had been placed under the necessity of selecting, as the saying is, a 'hero,' we tell you at once that to yourself we should have preferred A. R. Garth, deceased. We are narrating plain occurrences, however. Garth died.

Garth was found dead; and *you*—you are now shrinking from your own suggestions as to the circumstances of his death. The story must be unfolded here as it was unfolded to yourself.

'Strength of mind!' repeated Mr. Herbert, in his ruminations. 'Is strength of mind, then, to be gauged by the weakness of the impressions which the mind receives?'

The Commissary had been retailing recollections of his own, from what he represented to be a similar case. His prolix analogies now exhausted themselves. They came to a close in startling trombone ejaculations—'Ahem! Hem!' for instance, in semiquavers and quavers; 'Ho!' in crotchets; and 'Hah-h!' in a cavernous, awful, final breve. He had simply been retailing commonplaces tediously.

'I assured myself at once, this morning, that the action of the heart had ceased,' he added, after another survey of the corpse—'and as for the cause of death, I thought it was perfectly manifest.'

'It's clear, if M. le Commissaire will pardon me,' said Toppin—'that this is not death from dislocation of the neck.'

'Be it so,' answered that dignitary; 'I made no examination at the time.'

'Nor has the cause of death been strangulation,' resumed the monotonous voice, expounding to the class. 'It is true

that the appearances to be noted after death by hanging are not uniform or constant, and that an eminent authority tells us no single sign is invariably present, diagnostic of death by hanging. But neither strangulation, nor fracture of the cervical vertebræ, has in this case constituted the cause of death. In death by hanging, the constricting force is the weight of the body, wholly or in part; or the weight multiplied by the distance through which the body falls. The features of the subject will sometimes be found distorted, expressive of keen suffering. Ordinarily, however, the countenance is pale and composed. The eyes are sometimes extremely prominent; the pupils dilated. The hands are often tightly clenched—so tightly that the nails may be found driven into the palm. On a post-mortem, symptoms may be revealed simulating irritant poisoning. Persons who have been revived after losing consciousness from suspension by the neck by means of a ligature or noose—that is, as we say, subjects who have been partially hanged—have described various sensations, similar to those of cerebral congestion and narcotic stupor. In the case before us there are none of the external signs usually characteristic of death by hanging.'

'Foul play!' said the Commissary with satisfaction. 'Foul play, then.'

'When death has not been instantaneous, convulsive movements, of the type observed in asphyxia, may continue for several minutes after the suspension of the body; and the heart may beat for a considerable period after all other vital manifestations have ended.'

'The action of the heart must have ceased hours before my arrival,' repeated M. Renaud's colleague; 'I tested the heart immediately on arriving. Ahem—hem!'

'All the appearances usually to be observed in the neck, in cases of hanging—and this fact, monsieur'—the speaker addressed himself momentarily to Mr. Herbert—'has not been overlooked by one of your own writers of eminence, dealing with the subject—may be produced by a suspension of the body after death, especially if the lower limbs have been pulled forcibly downward.'

Mr. Herbert, who was schooling himself to exhibit absolute unconcern, involuntarily looked towards the speaker. This time, M. Renaud was fixedly regarding him with wide-

open eyes. What did he wish? What did he wish him to say? Why did not M. Renaud turn to the others? It seemed to Mr. Herbert that the others must be remarking them. Why did not M. Renaud transfer his gaze to these others? Ah—he wished him to understand something—to read—what? He was to read in that fixed regard, it seemed to him, the words, blurred, distant, uncertain—larger, unmistakable, distinct—larger still—and vivid—'You shall tell me what you know!'

Really, now—really! Oh, indeed! Well, he, she, or it—whatever the power might be that was thus seeking to command him—it, she, or he would wait a long time before the name of——no, no! he would not even *think* her name—before any allusion to the woman whom this dead man had loved should pass his lips! He would not even see her image, mentally. He would not think of the oblong packet, enveloped in white paper. He would not wonder what its contents were. He would not guess that the contents were a single object. He would not guess that the single object was a photographed portrait; he would not see the face upon the photograph—he would *not* see it—he would NOT see it—though how could he help seeing the face: it was always in his mind!—but no power should force him to divulge her name! 'Evelyn'—Mr. Herbert feared that he appealed aloud, but the appeal was in truth made without speaking—'aid me—aid me not to pronounce your name!' He looked away from M. Renaud.

Had an instant elapsed—many minutes—why were the others glancing at him as if he had been about to interpose?

'You were going to say——' began Toppin inquiringly.

'I? Nothing whatever!' answered Mr. Herbert.

Mr. Toppin wondered at this absolute unconcern. When they had come into that room his companion was professing to be overwhelmed with grief!

M. Renaud lounged to the far window, softly rubbed one of the small panes, and then lounged back to the table. He took up the oblong packet and removed the covering.

'This identifies one of our visitors of last evening,' said he, almost inaudibly. 'Benoît will satisfy us on that point.' He handed the enclosure to Detective Toppin. 'A countrywoman of yours?'

'Who knows?' replied Toppin, having immediately recognised the portrait.

'The photographers will know,' was the response. The lassitude of the speaker, as he moved towards the Commissary and conferred with him, impressed Mr. Toppin as unusual.

Toppin had stared a long while at counterparts of this portrait in the Rue de Rivoli, the day he went up to make his first call on Mr. Herbert, Rue Beaujon. It was the last 'New' of the young English lady whose signature he had noticed on the phials, pots, and boxes of the chemist's counter. The signature ran 'E. Ormond-Weir;' and the portrait had been labelled in the shop-window, 'Madame Ormond-Weir, la "Fasionable Beauty;" Dernière Nouveauté de Londres.' At the foot of the photograph you saw the name of the Bond Street house by whom it had been executed. M. Renaud was perhaps too sensitively Parisian to frequent the arcades of the Rue de Rivoli, sacred—unless it rained—to foreign excursionists, and to French country-folk; but chance might easily lead him in that direction, he might linger at a shop-front, and—the identification might be complete before the return of the foreign post.

His companion scarcely glanced at this fine portrait. And yet it was this lady's name, reflected Toppin, which on no consideration was to be brought out in connection with the case. And it was an effective portrait, too. *'Cré nom!*

Too certainly, however, his companion had divined! Too well he knew those lineaments—too sharply, now, it struck and wounded him, the pride of form, the pride of face, the dissembled pride that challenged the beholder to comparisons! The courage which so splendidly concealed her own unhappiness he marvelled at and worshipped. Great God! Was it possible that that man, her husband, could have so recklessly mortified—as he knew he had done—so brutally humiliated, ignored, and callously martyrized—the idol of the dead Allan Garth! Was it sane of Evelyn herself to renounce all worthy aims, to resign all worthier thought, for the sole aim and thought of winning back the man Ormond-Weir, whom she loved—a mere 'fascinating' debauchee, who boasted, in men's society; who boasted truly, as it seemed, and whose spirit might have animated the driver of a slave gang! That was a man, Hugh Ormond-

Weir, whose aspirations rose to the height of setting tailors' fashions for his own sex.

There was a collar which was named after him! Ha! ha!

Sanity! She was sane enough, in her self-abandonment. It was the grandeur of the woman who loves—her constancy, her indulgence, her magnificent blindness. That she was pitifully infatuated, weak, abject, miserably servile, many persons, chiefly ladies with old vinegar in their veins, might have moaned and maundered, despising or contemning her, had many persons but surprised her secret. No one, man or woman, should ever say that in his hearing, suddenly resolved Mr. Herbert. Strength and worth of character were not to be gauged, were they, by 'the faintness of the impression which the mind received?' Garth himself would neither have contemned her nor despised her, although he must have early judged his fascinating rival. In his own reverence for the Evelyn Farrar who had been won from him, quitting him with happy and heartless laughter, Garth was the man to have offered the strange spectacle of reverence for the authoritative, brilliant, vulgar-souled, gross anecdote-monger she had married: her caressed husband, who paraded and betrayed women; betrayed them to one another; and then betrayed and paraded the infirmities of them all.

'*You* don't need to stay, sir,' said Toppin, as his companion started to his feet again. 'I'll see this out; and what it comes to I'll report sharp. Give me an appointment—that's all.'

'The only real question for me now is the existence of a will,' replied Mr. Herbert nervously.

They paced the room together.

'Ah! there'll be delay about the search through the papers. They'll want to examine them for their own purposes; and we shall have to wait.'

'That corpse will drive me mad,' murmured Mr. Herbert, hesitating to return from the far window. 'A frightful experience—a frightful experience.'

What had happened, just now?

'Renaud means to tell us something else, sir. Look!'

Simplice Renaud had thrown open the cupboard which had been built out from the wall in one of the garret recesses.

He was passing to his colleague various articles from the shelves of the interior. One of the articles was a large yellow earthenware basin. The Commissary uttered an exclamation, and poured the contents of the basin carefully upon the table.

'Motive of the murder not robbery,' said he. 'Bank of France notes to the value of'—he counted some loose paper, and then unpinned a small bundle—'to the value of ten thousand francs; loose gold, about—about—two hundred and fifty francs—let us see——'

'Motive might have been robbery,' commented Mr. Toppin, in an undertone; 'and the thieves might never have thought of looking in an open basin for £400 odd.'

M. Renaud brought out a common tumbler, held it up to the light, smelt at it, and passed the tip of his finger along the rim. He brought forth a second tumbler, and a third, and in each case he tested similarly the rim of the glass, held the latter to the light, and endeavoured to detect the nature of their last contents. One of the tumblers he handed to the Commissary. The remainder of the search apparently produced no satisfactory results.

'I will leave you here,' said Mr. Herbert hurriedly to Detective Toppin. 'Do what you can with your French colleagues to procure me a view of the papers at the earliest possible moment. Or, it will suffice if they themselves communicate whatever they may find, if anything in the nature of a testamentary disposition.'

'Oh, they won't hurry for anyone, sir; but I dare say I can do more with them than you.'

Mr. Toppin was retaining the photograph between his forefingers transversely, the fingers posed at opposite corners. He administered a fillip with an under-finger, and the photograph spun round.

'A —— fine specimen of flesh-and-blood, I should think,' muttered T. T., half to himself. 'Statues! I know the Louvre Galleries in and out, and there ain't a finer figure among all the antiques'—Mr. Toppin pronounced 'antikes'—'than this!'

'D—n your insolence!' whispered Mr. Herbert to him fiercely.

'Sir?'

Mr. Toppin was quite taken aback, as he reflected afterwards.

'D—n your infernal insolence!' whispered Mr. Herbert with more distinctness, and with greater fierceness, and looking his companion in the eyes.

'Forgets where he is, and wants me to hit him,' thought the athletic T. T. 'D—d if I *do!* Dear, dear, what a state I should leave him in! Well, he's a good 'un, but too stiff across the shoulder, and a bit under my weight; though if he was clever with his 'ands—— But he ain't clever with his 'ands—that you can see. Gently, sir, gently,' he went on aloud: 'a slip of the tongue it was, and if it's annoyed you, I'm sorry. But this here ain't my fault—come, sir!' He touched with a brown finger and blue finger-nail the sparse but classic drapery of that sculptor's vision, the fashionable beauty of that hour: Mrs. Ormond-Weir, the prey of the art patron; the property of any of the people who keep shows; the speculation of any touting 'photographic artist;' the advertisement of milliners; the 'ah—ah—now, 'pon my honour, now—ah—ah—you wong me, Fwed: I wasn't at Wyde till two days afterwards—now, weally'—of Captain the Hon. Walsingham Joy; the 'real good bizness, look 'ere, Jim,' of Alf, who pays his threepence extra at the waxworks to see the model; the envy of adventuresses; a victim of all prurient innuendo; the shame of honest wives; the blush of honest girls; the poison of the stationary mind; the knife that coldly enters a white bosom, if a husband or a lover, always trusted until then, should, gazing at the portrait or the model, reveal some poison or some treachery in his mind.

Mr. Herbert seized the portrait from his companion.

'Oh, but—they'll want it as a document in the case!' interposed Toppin, checking him.

Well—a few more irreverences—a few coarse curiosities, more or less, could add but little to the already stupendous bulk. What costume, however, was *this*, for *her!* How could she—how could she—'Bah—I am holding forth like a washerwoman!' Mr. Herbert broke off brusquely—'How could she go for to do it? and how I am a-taking-on! Thank heaven, she must not be censured for the demeaning aims of some other semi-nudities of Fashion. All this is to win back to her side one worthless man. Poor Evelyn, indeed! No

weapon left to her but the chance of arousing in that one some species of a jealousy. In him! Poor Evelyn! Hugh Ormond-Weir a jealous friend or comrade! jealous as either friend, or lover, or husband!'

Having drawn aside the curtain which concealed a toilette-stand in the deep corner near the corpse, M. Renaud had continued his minute search amongst the odds and ends of a commodious drawer. The object of his search could not be found within the drawer; nor could it be discovered in the narrow space between the large trunk and the wall. He was so curiously deliberate in his movements that, now and then, as he bent aside or stooped, or spread his handkerchief out, and knelt down upon it, he had the air of cynically offering provocations to the sense of the absurd. At this instant, he was rising to his feet; warbling—oh, wonder!—warbling softly to himself. On the bare floor he had placed a broad-brimmed, soft felt hat, belonging to the deceased. Was he mocking at the three spectators? The Commissary's moustache went into brief convulsions. He corrected staccato quavers of 'ha!' with a 'hem!' *forte*, and a rest. Another bar of quavers, and he would have thrown a *sou* into the hat.

'Do me the extreme kindness, gentlemen, of not disturbing this obsolete hat,' said M. Renaud gently, with his eyelids lowered, as was his habit. 'Otherwise I cannot possibly produce the pigeons, or the long strips of coloured paper, or the bouquet for the prettiest lady present.' He turned, lounged by the suspended body, unfastened the garret-window, opened the window, and looked out, to the right and to the left. Again he warbled—this time more loudly:

'La, la, la—lĭē—ĭē—ĭē—ĭĕty
La, la, la—lĭē—ĭē—ĭē—ty——ah!'

breaking the bell-like falsetto with a descent to the octave on the last syllable.

'*Mon cher confrère*,' resumed M. Renaud, as he returned from the open window—'by some person or persons to be traced, chloroform was administered to our worthy friend here last evening; the action of the heart failed thereupon; and he was strung up to that cross-beam after death.' He kicked the hat away. 'At this spot stains were hastily

obliterated. The chloroform was administered to the deceased after a meal. You remember what Benoît stated.'

An agonized detective-officer was Thomas Toppin, as these words fell upon his ear. Always the possibility: the attainment, never. A slashing case, this, for the British public; a case to dream of, and to tell—every morning in the newspapers; the case he had dreamed of every morning in his professional ambitions—'igh life, poison, mysterious ladies, and a will. And collaboration with M. Renaud. Antagonism with M. Renaud. Mining and counter-mining against the Illustrious and Ineffable. Renaud once more chivalrous, but T. T. sternly true to public duty. Renaud worsted. Everything brought out, everything shown up. Fearful exposures. Great names. Influences brought to bear. Toppin threatened in anonymous letters posted in district 'London, W.;' Toppin implored; untold sums, if Toppin would but show himself chivalrous—if he would but shield the suspected murderesses; Toppin hocussed; the globe re-echoing with the name of Detective Thomas Top.; the old Colonel reading the telegraphed summaries in Wigwam City, Penn.; Toppin true to public duty; the old Colonel saying, 'True to his public duty, Toppin;' Toppin made away with; 'What has become of Detective Toppin?' indignation resounding through the globe; just in time, Toppin to the fore; terrific scandals; Renaud's career shown up, too; disappearance of Renaud, to escape from storm of popular fury; Toppin protects Renaud, and finds him an inviolable hiding-place; 'Step across and see us, Mr. Toppin;' Wigwam City, Penn.; Toppin and the old Colonel, and the old Colonel's whisky——

And here he was merely figuring in the case to aid in the escape of mysterious ladies! And for a consideration. A private inquiry office. Not if they were guilty, though—ah, *'cré nom!* if they were guilty, he must go through with his duty, and bring the guilt home to them. And on this present occasion, of the same way of thinking might be Simplice —Jean—Louis Renaud. He and Simplice might, after all, be rowing in the same boat this time; they might work together for a conviction; in which event the ends of justice would be served; truth would be served; served, likewise, would be the professional interests of Detective Toppin. Might start the private inquiry office on his own account.

'The flask or phial which contained the chloroform would doubtless be carried away by the persons by whom the drug had been administered. Not so the cloth, or handkerchief.' M. Renaud lapsed into the level tone of perfunctory exposition. 'Not so that which has served as vehicle for the administration of the drug.'

And here we might possibly advance a step in the path towards a clue.

CHAPTER X.

'THE person or persons who have administered the chloroform,' proceeded M. Renaud, 'would endeavour to get rid of the cloth, handkerchief, morsel of sponge—whatever the vehicle employed might be—before rejoining other persons, before departing from the scene of the crime or accident.'

Accident?

'The recent presence of the drug in a considerable quantity would leave an odour sufficiently strong to be detected by any chance neighbour familiarized with this anæsthetic. The fumes evaporate with more or less rapidity, of course—in accordance with the particular circumstances. In one of the cases of chloroform-drugging for purposes of robbery—a case which occurred in a London hotel situated near Charing Cross—there was no clue for the police to make use of but the faintest possible trace of chloroform in a small object that had remained on the floor unnoticed during several hours. M. Macé, with whose assertions as to the general practicability of chloroforming sleeping persons I must say that I do not agree, has quoted that case among examples of chloroform-poisoning which were known to himself during his term of office as chief of the Sûreté. The victim was a woman. The English detective, who was engaged in an examination of the premises afterwards, picked up a small object that resembled a mushroom. It was a piece of sponge, still slightly impregnated with what seemed to be the odour of the *reinette* apple. That discovery sufficed to indicate that the practised chloroformist had been at work. But the success of such experiments is exaggerated. Although often successful, when conducted with due precautions, we know that the result of administering chloroform to sleeping persons is often to awaken them. The

chloroformist's mode of setting to work, however, implies very careful premeditation. He or she would therefore have employed no article which obviously would establish an identity. The non-practised chloroformist would administer the drug by means of a cloth or handkerchief; but, where feasible, the cloth or handkerchief would be the property of the subject, not of the operator. In this case the chloroform has been administered by a person or persons planning the affair with some cleverness. Water was poured from the jug into the hand-basin of the toilet-table; it has not been used; but the excuse provided an opportunity for securing, as far as we can judge, the needed vehicle for the drug, a common towel belonging to the deceased. What would become of the chloroformed towel when the drug had been administered, with or without an intention to destroy life? If taken away, it would constitute a permanent peril for the individual who might endeavour to keep it hidden, or who might be known to have destroyed some article of that description. It would be left at the premises; but it would be hidden away, with the object of delaying the investigation. In the present case, it would undoubtedly have been concealed, because of the attempt made to mislead us by the suspension of the victim to that cross-beam, as though he had committed suicide. The towel was thrown out of the window, on one side, as far out of sight as possible; not altogether out of sight. From that window we can perceive it. The towel used for the administration of the anæsthetic lies in the gutter of the parapet.'

The speaker's colleague hastened to test the accuracy of this closing statement.

'Sure enough—ho! ho!' said he. 'A towel with a pink border. We'll soon recover it. An excellent affair, this!'

'An accident, did you suggest, monsieur?' inquired Mr. Herbert carelessly, advancing to M. Renaud.

'Quite conceivably, an accident.'

'Nothing easier to explain. *Pardi!*' said the Commissary. 'Defunct was in possession of letters compromising our mysterious visitant, *la belle que voilà*. Was threatening to communicate her letters to—no matter whom—her husband, if she's married: a *fiancé*, if she's been intriguing for a brilliant match: the police, if the letters contained some half-mad allusion to a history—infanticide—who knows! De-

funct put a price—no matter what price, a price unpayable—on the restitution of the letters. What more common in our experience? *Eh, messieurs—soyons francs—les hommes sont parfois de simples saligauds.* But, as to that, *les femmes le leur rendent bien*—hem! ho! ahah! Our ugly fellow here would not give the letters up at all, perhaps. Money had been paid over for the letters—the price he asked—and yet he would not give them up. Reckoned upon living on them always. Nothing commoner than such cases, on the one side or the other, where the people are well placed in society. *We* know that, *nous autres gens de la police.* Blackmail levied by men on women; blackmail levied by women on men. The charges are true; the charges are false; their monotony is wearisome, *c'est à dormir debout;* many people prefer to pay; others pay for a time, and watch their opportunity. But when the blackmailers are men—*Tonnerre de Brest!*—they're better-looking fellows than our rascal hung up to that beam. They *are* handsome men—there's that in their favour—the *gaillards* who blackmail women; and if a man's got good looks, *crédié!*—let him turn them to his profit. Those who say "No" to that are only the envious. Let him turn his birthright to his advantage in the world. That's the lesson women teach us; and women won't complain of him—so long as he doesn't interpose between them and their comfort or material interests—and even then! Why, even then, they'll sometimes boast of him and his exactions. *We* know that, *nous autres bons hommes de la police!* We know that, I think, Monsieur Renaud?'

The response was a delightful movement of the left arm and hand—a gesture which began again as soon as it left off. It conveyed—'We know it, oh, of course,' and then it hinted pleasingly, 'But those amongst us who are gifted as is gifted M. le Commissaire—oh, how much more certainly do we know it!—Patience!'

'And they're right. We're the aristocracy of Nature.' The speaker twisted his moustache, and growled, hah—hab—ho! 'And we've the best hearts, too,' he concluded—'and it's very simple why it should be so: we're never crossed. Then why is the aristocrat of Nature found blackmailing a woman, as our ugly interloper here appears to have done? Because she has taken his best years, and left

him to fight life's battle when unfitted by prolonged idleness, reliance on others; or—because some beautiful madam, third, or fourth, requires that he shall levy blackmail on the first. Our impudent scoundrel here must have robbed some other person of the compromising letters——'

A passage from a sonnet Garth had one day quoted to him, in a conversation that had ever since influenced the course of his own desultory reading, broke into the deductions which Mr. Herbert's legal mind had rapidly drawn from this new and practical aspect of the case. Garth had influenced him so powerfully that he could not comprehend how Evelyn—well, well, well!—the sonnet, was it not the eighty-ninth?—could it not explain something of the past story?—

'Knowing thy will,
'I will acquaintance strangle, and look strange;
Be absent from thy walks; and in my tongue
Thy sweet beloved name no more shall dwell,
Lest I (too much profane) should do it wrong,
And haply of our old acquaintance tell—'

'Knowing thy will!' O bitterness! The past, the present—a present hour that never shall rejoin hours past, hours that return no more. Memory—the moment, the Now—an abyss between. Life: O bitterness: the future veiled!

'Admitting the impossible'—Mr. Herbert made his preparations for departure; it seemed to him that he had been forgetting the dead human being; a friend of his own was in that room, dead; a friend whom he had honoured more than ever he could again honour any man—'admitting the impossible, the worst, her guilt'—he went on, with a thought which a strange fancy traced to that friend himself, the lifeless form—'Garth would have wished to figure as the basest, vilest, most cowardly of all ruffians, if in that way he could but save her from the just consequences of her guilt. A blackmailer! Purloiner of letters! Garth, a man who exacted prices, struck bargains, and repudiated his bonds!'

'And that accounts for the presence of ten thousand francs, odd, in a place like this,' wound up the Commissary. 'He gulled us, nicely, all the same! Well—he wouldn't make a restitution of the letters, and so the lady came for them, provided with an anæsthetic. It wasn't a bad idea,

ma foi!' She acted the weak woman, who accepts the situation, and hands over her a few thousand francs—and then, *paf!* They sent him off to sleep and ransacked the premises for the letters. Only—he didn't wake up when they had found them, or—he collapsed at once. Hem!—Heart weak; that's the explanation. Frightened—they managed to string him up.'

A good defence, if the worst came to the worst, Bradall should come over from Budge Row, and help him, decided Mr. Herbert. The English solicitor, who had been their Paris agent in ordinary business, lived in the Rue Boissy d'Anglas. Would go to him as soon as matters looked serious. Should instruct him in the sense indicated by M. le Commissaire. A lie? But the law of England assumed innocence till guilt was proved. Not so in France? But he was the legal adviser, not the judge; and he would be bound to do the best he could do for his client. Should instruct their agent in the sense he had just understood. A lie? Well, but, he possessed, or would have possessed, the dead man's sanction. If he lied, it would be by connivance, not explicitly. Then he was willing to connive at falsehood?

'Now,' added the Commissary, 'was or was not one of these two visitors a man in woman's clothes?'

'Query,' ventured Mr. Toppin, deeply interested—'Were the compromising letters or documents actually recovered, or are they still amongst the papers here?'

Mr. Herbert profited by the pause to take his leave. He gave Mr. Toppin the appointment necessary, and summoned up his energies for the task of adequately acknowledging the courtesy of M. le Commissaire. As for M. Renaud, partly hidden by the open cupboard door, he was to be heard warbling *pianissimo*—

'La, la, la—lī̆ē—ī̆ē—ī̆ē—ī̆ĕty,
La, la, la—lī̆ē—ī̆ē—ī̆ē—ty—ah!'

Whilst Toppin and the Commissary noisily conversed, Mr. Herbert approached Simplice Renaud to address a formal parting phrase to him. He felt conscious of a singular restraint. What had happened to affect their relations? They were mere and chance acquaintances; and yet from the one to the other extended an undefinable

antagonism, and sympathy as well—both repulsion and attraction.

'Bid farewell to your compatriot, monsieur,' murmured M. Renaud.

'Ah——?' Mr. Herbert paled. 'The dissecting-room?'

'You may be present, if you wish.'

The body of his poor friend to be bared on the dissecting-table, and *he* a spectator!

'My business in connection with your inquiry limits itself to the question whether the deceased has left a will,' replied Mr. Herbert.

'You were personally acquainted with the deceased; you have been profoundly moved; do you feel no resentment against those who may have caused his death?'

'The law will take its course.'

'May I offer you a word of counsel?'

M. Renaud was apparently studying the printed form which he must have taken from some receptacle in the spacious recess, just prior to Mr. Herbert's approach.

'Counsel?'

'Yes; and well meant.'

'You are extremely considerate, monsieur!'

'Extremely. And my counsel to you is—not to leave Paris hurriedly.'

'In that I shall of course consult my own convenience, together with the business claims upon me.'

'Because they may want you for examination by the *juge d'instruction*. This has been a crime, monsieur.'

'Accidental homicide — your colleague states. The deceased extorted hush-money, and still refused to part with——' Mr. Herbert hesitated. He was vilely slandering his friend. But his friend would have wished this. It was for the sake of the woman whom his friend had loved. 'Your colleague appears to be a man of wide experience,' he resumed more firmly.

'I hold in my hand an uncashed banker's draft for a fairly large sum. The few lines accompanying it show that it was a quarterly remittance from Hamburg, on investments in Continental securities. The investments were in the name of Allen, evidently. The deceased was in no need of hush-money, monsieur. Nor did he hoard. Nor was he mad. Think!—I and those who act with me know this

neighbourhood, monsieur. This is not the first time that we meet with the "*Anglais de la Rue Caïn.*"'

'Will all this get into the newspapers?'

'Not immediately—for what it is. The case will be returned as an ordinary suicide. That imparts confidence to the assassin or assassins. Then we catch them. I am candid?'

'Quite. What I want to look at, however, is the will, if any—and that alone.'

'Ah, we must keep you waiting a little. Call upon me to-morrow, and I will see.'

'Thank you—I am content to leave all interposition in the affair to Detective Toppin.'

'He will represent you in all matters?'

'Entirely. Should I be summoned away from Paris, he can watch this simple business for us—for my firm, I mean.'

'Remain in Paris, monsieur; we shall want you.' The speaker raised his eyelids for an instant—an instant only. 'Remain in Paris. Otherwise all this must get into the newspapers.'

The Commissary was assisting Mr. Toppin to clamber through the window. 'When we've recovered that little object out there,' observed the functionary, with a confident 'hem, hem!'—Mr. Toppin, astride of the window sill, turning to nod *au revoir* to his companion—'we'll interrogate our stone-deaf, bedridden neighbour.'

'Bid farewell to your compatriot, monsieur,' repeated M. Renaud, in his hushed accents.

Mr. Herbert touched the black sleeve, withdrew his outstretched hand at once, and then, flushing, touched the black sleeve again. 'Old fellow?' he whispered. The body hung motionless.

'You will hear from me through Detective Toppin,' added Simplice Renaud.

'Soon?'

'Very soon.'

At last—he had at last crossed the threshold of the grim stage! With difficulty he mastered the impulse—an impulse which would have driven him at headlong speed from the room, the house, the fatal environment, the accursed air. In the vestibule he found Benoît, re-arranging his red flower-

pots. Benoît looked up, laughed noiselessly, and muttered some unintelligible *patois*.

'A dull week of May,' said Mr. Herbert passing. The man followed him to the doorway. 'You would not think that we shall soon be in June,' said Mr. Herbert, stopping involuntarily at the sight of the half-dozen idlers in the Rue Caïn. Benoît fixed his vacant gaze at somewhere about the top-button of Mr. Herbert's waistcoat, and laughed again, noiselessly. 'The Rue de Caen!' said Mr. Herbert—'The Rue de Caen! Pah—move out of it, my friend!'

'The flowers will grow,' mumbled Benoît—'all the same, they must grow—the flowers must grow.'

Achille and his condemned comrade, in the centre of the knot of idlers, glanced simultaneously beyond Mr. Herbert, as he issued from the obscure vestibule and made his way from the premises. They were probably awaiting the departure of someone else—of M. Renaud. Before turning out of the Rue de Caen to regain a more frequented thoroughfare, Mr. Herbert encountered the two women whom he had seen gossiping at the entrance to the house he had just quitted. The elder nodded to him familiarly; the younger displayed a sudden interest in a high stack of chimneys opposite. Both indulged once more in the unmirthful smile. The younger of the two was clearly quite unconscious of aught in the universe but chimney-pots. Her languishing upward regard brought the chin forward very curiously; this threw out the throat, the full throat of an ardent *brune;* and the torso timidly participated in the combined effect. Belonging to sets of plastic graces very generally to be observed, these movements should be scarcely worth noting down, descriptively, were it not that common courtesy should always yield some slight acknowledgment of the pains invariably taken to ensure attention for them. Mr. Herbert remembered that the Princess Treize-Etoiles, whose runaway horse he had stopped one morning, by the merest fluke, in a bye-path of the Bois de Boulogne—the incident dated back to the epoch of his studies at the École de Droit—looked upwards, away from you, intensely, just like this bonnetless denizen of the Rue de Caen. These are among the feminine effects which appeal to the appreciations of a great many people much more powerfully than plain acts of charity, sincere words of sympathy—simple manifestations

of a kind heart; and the practice of such effects as these may be confidently recommended to all well-favoured young women who may be desirous of appealing powerfully to the appreciations of a great many people.

'It's finished, then, with the neighbour?' asked the elder of the two.

'It's finished,' answered Mr. Herbert.

'What a poor-spirited creature!' said she. 'As if there were not other women in the world!'

'*Mesdames*'—Mr. Herbert raised his hat, and endeavoured to continue on his path.

'I saw the visitors arrive last evening,' added the elder woman. 'If M. Renaud wanted to make a scandal, I could point them out to him—one of them, that is—amongst a thousand and more. What a —— to hang himself! That's not the way ——!'

'*Mesdames* ——'

'My brother-in-law is furious. He had a weekly allowance from the "Anglais de la Rue Caïn," because he pretended to have lived where the Arabs are, and to have had all his property destroyed by the English soldiers—to hang himself for a woman! Weren't the rest of us good enough for him?'

Mr. Herbert passed with a ceremonious bow, and sick at heart. 'What airs!' he heard shouted after him in the same voice. 'Another ——! Ha! ha!' The girl joined in her companion's loud laugh. At the corner of the street he wheeled round suddenly for a final survey of the Rue Caïn. The girl had loitered behind her companion, and was looking back. She instantly turned her head again—'of course,' commented Mr. Herbert—'of course.' It was nothing, the occurrence, and yet it set him thinking of so many fair acquaintances at that moment hundreds of miles away. Not one of them would have been otherwise than mightily displeased to know that any peculiarity of her mind or manners could be suggested by that bonnetless, bold hussey round that corner, in that horrid, dreadful street. Lady G. used to be always cutting him dead, and then thawing; the eldest Miss Bream (old Bream had retired from the Leadenhall firm, Bream and Dorking, some ten years ago, and Dorking was now Sir Richard, sheriff of West Ham and Essex), Elfrida Wane, Gladys Munchausen, the Hon. Sarah Tufto, and Bertha Coventry (daughter of the member for the Godiva

Burghs) might be taken at hazard among the more brilliant damsels whom he had met, as oddly addicted to ignoring you, for no earthly reason, and oddly unable to disguise from you, at the same time, in spite of their experience in the infliction of wounds, that their ignoring you was no more than *jeu de scène*—naught but play-acting.

Well, now—whither should the cabman drive? The first article in his programme was to be the despatch of duplicate telegrams to London. By that means he might learn the Paris address of Mrs. Ormond-Weir within a few hours. She and Andréa Bertaux might leave at once for England—perhaps by that night's mail. As his destination, Mr. Herbert named the telegraph-office, Boulevard des Capucines; a telegram for abroad would be despatched thence without delay. Lucky that he had quitted the house betimes. Later, it would have been easy for Renaud to instruct someone to watch his acts and deeds. Capital, to be thus bowling away from them all!

Apropos of Renaud, what the devil had that fellow been attempting?

Did the fellow think he was a mesmerist! And, as a matter of fact, those results which could be produced on hysteric, epileptic, and cataleptic patients, were they ever in the least possible with unwilling subjects, in a normal state of health? Mr. Herbert had been present, as a friend of the consulting surgeon's, at quiet little experiments in a West London hospital, on inmates with a predisposing disease in the 'family history,' as the doctors said. He believed he had seen the hypnotic sleep, but in each case there had been a 'family history' of some predisposing cause or other: it was 'fits,' or it was hysteria. In spite of all that might be advanced by the believers, was there a single authentic instance of success against antagonistic subjects in the normal conditions of health? His friend the consulting surgeon, who had not accompanied him to the experiments, had warned him that, whatever might be his impressions as to the validity of the phenomena obtained, no *mala fides* was to be imputed to the practitioners. The practitioner might be an enthusiast; in favour of his own hobby, the enthusiast would be gullible; it was flattering for the practitioner to feel that he disposed of occult powers; and there were practitioners who, without being at all blind enthusiasts,

wished so ardently to succeed that they might be expected to treat with considerate indulgence willing subjects who 'did *so* want to go off,' but somehow couldn't. In public shows it would be the spectator who was duped; in the experiments held privately for the furtherance of scientific research it was often, oddly often—had remarked his friend the consulting surgeon—the practitioner who was duped by an habitual 'subject.' But why should the subject aim at such deception? Why accept the inconveniences of learning signs and tricks—the rigid upturning of the eyeballs, the contortionist's bend backwards—and all the newest varieties of suggestion? 'Why?' had returned his friend—'because the habitual subjects get their fees, or because they want to be exhibited to nice people, in nice places, where they can make nice (and useful) acquaintances; it's very useful sometimes to a nice girl who wants to marry advantageously—to marry, say, some old, moth-eaten, eccentric peer.' That was true enough, admitted Mr. Herbert; quite true, as far as it went. He could picture old Earl Wrinklemede, for instance (the wildest of wild youth some sixty years ago), pushing back his seedy skull-cap, munching an imaginary crust, and hypnotizing the sylph of the drawing-room *séance* with a few tremulous passes on his own account. It might be that his lordship had not until then so much as dreamt that he, too, like Dr. Subtle in the comedy, could 'do things.' Of course, his lordship, as a student of the psychic forces, could not possibly part with a sylph so susceptible to his own new-found powers that she 'went off' as soon as he chose to fix her with his filmy eye. Mos' int'res'ing—mos' int'res'ing! 'Nevah knew I p'sessed the latent powah!' The sylph would recollect quite well exactly what his lordship said to her, when hypnotized, that very day last week; she would read a letter locked up by his lordship in the very next room, and, dipping into the dark waters of futurity, she would extract from the sable flood the image of a second Countess Wrinklemede, a young person whose features were concealed from her, whose features she couldn't possibly—no, do what she could, she couldn't, couldn't—perceive; but who, set off her white skin with black velvet robes and had a ma', a bishop's niece, that once had kept her carriage-and-pair. Mos' int'res'ing, mos' int'res'ing! Charming *séance*. 'Mazing rayceptivitay. 'Markable powahs. Dev'lish fine creature.

Mother—fearful cad. Father—nevah met the father. But when you could prove in the simplest of fashions that the subject whom you sent into 'xceptional somnambulistic lucidities had rightly construed the future's mystic page, you were not going to go out of your way now to disprove revelations for which your own latent powahs might be said to be in a sort of way, now, responsible. The Wrinklemedes had always been renowned for independence of the world's opinion. You owed it to science to place on record a perfectly conclusive example.

'I'll take my oath that in *my* case,' soliloquized Mr. Herbert, 'there's nothing of the "family history" business. And yet I've got some notion that that fellow was trying mesmeric dodges on with *me*. At one moment there was something which occurred—something which obliged me to make some kind of effort of the will. I remember that we looked at each other; and I read his thoughts. By Jove, if I were of a more nervous temperament, and if there *is* what my friend the consulting surgeon said there was *not*, I'd put the fellow off to sleep myself. Poor old Garth could have done that. As for Benoît, there may be *absinthe* in his family history; shouldn't wonder; but he had almost talked himself into a paralysis before Renaud dealt with him; it was the intoxication of his own chatter that floored Benoît.'

The drive through the open air, in brighter and more animated thoroughfares of Paris, no doubt tended to revive a cheerful frame of mind which also was in part attributable to reaction against his recent lugubrious experiences. He began to feel confident of proving one too many for M. Renaud. A pretty piece of assurance, to play the mesmerist with a hard-headed lawyer! The mesmerist! About one family out of every three that he knew had its mesmerist young man or woman, who had studied nothing of the matter, physiologically, but fancied they were specially endowed by nature with the 'gift.' They were all specially endowed, and it was always with a gift that was very rare. They darted fingers at you, and stared; they stared at you until you felt quite sorry for them. And there were people in the prime of life who went on in the same way. 'How does your head seem, now, Miss Podophlyn? Are you not conscious of a tingling at the nape of the neck?' Half these flourishers very likely had some atavian predispositions in

their own 'history,' as a certain young artist friend of his might have demonstrated, if allowed to experiment. Not but what there was the unique case noted and described by Dr. Wendell Holmes—the Venner case: their little weak-eyed, sandy-haired, fat-faced newspaper acquaintance, with a stutter—that little, fat, round, newspaper man who was a friend of Garth's—had told them of the Venner case.

There was an animal magnetism in the world; here and there, you came across a man or woman, repository of the force—but it was only, only here and there: and, even then, the force was perhaps exclusive in its manifestation, not general: your magnetism would be often but that mutual action of two temperaments for which other designations of the simplest order were invented long before diplomas of science. Your temperaments would be magnetic for each other; by the remainder of the human race you would be found about as magnetic as the wicker-frame denuded of the feminine robe. Magnetic! The term has become vulgarized. Animal magnetism! Colloquial license warped and killed the best phrases that were coined. Everyone was magnetic, nowadays, who said, 'How do you do?' in a pleasant fashion from the chest, and, 'How well you are looking!' with an air of glad sincerity.

In his narrative of the Venner case, Dr. Wendell Holmes had quoted the passage in which, with Garrick present to his mind, the author of 'The Rosciad' had written of the

> 'Strange powers that lie
> Within the magic circle of the eye.'

Leaning back in his open cab, and pursuing the train of thought with his own eyes half shut, Mr. Herbert disinterred many occasions when, having unconsciously regarded with fixedness some unknown person in some public place, that person had presently turned towards him, and their glances had crossed; or when he also, mechanically changing the direction of an idle gaze, had perceived the regard of some unknown person fixed upon himself. The experience was common enough, no doubt. He wondered whether the vicinity of any friend, or any—any client—of whom you had been long thinking with intentness—whether the unsuspected vicinity——

'*Andréa!*'

Whether, unsuspected on both sides, that vicinity could so affect—— But it was a voice, no souvenir; it was a voice that had suddenly struck and pained him: *her* voice: a contralto murmur: Garth had well said——

The closed carriage which was now advancing across the Place de l'Opéra had apparently been impeded, side by side with his own vehicle, in the opposing streams of traffic at this point. As he noted the route followed by the rapidly advancing carriage, he detected, visible for a moment at the lowered window, the masculine features of Andréa Bertaux.

'To the left, to the left,' shouted Mr. Herbert to his coachman, who was keeping to the right, and flogging his horse forward.

'*I* know the Boulevard des Capucines!' retorted the coachman.

'Rue de la Paix, I tell you!'

'You said the telegraph-office, Boulevard des Capucines.'

'Rue de la Paix! Rue de la Paix!'

'Oh, very well—*va pour la Rue de la Paix!*'

'*Et plus vite que ça, sacré——!*'

'Ah, but I've got a thirsty horse, and he hasn't quenched his thirst since breakfast.'

'There shall be a good *pourboire*. Quick!'

'*Bien mon bourgeois, bien!—Huc—hue donc!—Hue—Tu vas boire t't'-à-l'heure!*'

They struggled back into the Rue de la Paix. On either side of the roadway, opposite the establishments of jewellers, milliners, chemists, etc., equipages were drawn up in attendance on proprietors whose errands or whose dilatorinesses appeared to be stimulating the irony of their waged and liveried satirists. The roadway itself was almost clear of traffic. In the vehicle ahead, nearing the Place Vendôme, Mr. Herbert believed he recognised the carriage of which one of the occupants was Andréa Bertaux.

'Stop where that carriage stops,' said he.

'*Bien, patron, bien!*' said his coachman—'*hue!*'

The carriage traversed the Place Vendôme, entered the Rue Castiglione, and proceeded onward to the Rue de Rivoli. Turning the corner here, the arcade at the left-hand, the gilt-headed railings of the Tuileries Gardens at the right, it drove more slowly towards an hotel entrance

situated beneath the arcade. The occupants were alighting as the open cab conveying Mr. Herbert came to a standstill.

'Oh,' he heard, in frank and girlish tones—'is not *this* Mr. Herbert?—Eve!'

The speaker had been the first to alight. She had at once noticed his arrival. The companion whose attention she thus drew to Mr. George Herbert lifted her head and acknowledged his salutes with a vacant smile of formal greeting. It was she—it was indeed Evelyn: but changed—seared by what experience—by what flame from the furnace of temptation?

'Andréa forgot to write,' were her deliberate words. 'But we felt sure that we should see you.'

A shudder rocked his frame. She was acting; she was repeating a phrase resolved on in advance.

'I think you never met my sister?' The voice was hard, and—for the time, at least—had lost its music. 'Maud; Mr. Herbert—who has been so kind in business matters.'

They moved slowly into the courtyard.

Superb Eve—Eve of the black, boundless tresses, the white brow, the flashing eyes—grandly handsome, thought Mr. Herbert—

> 'Thine eyes are stars of morning.
> Thy lips are crimson flowers—'

bright crimson azalea flowers that blossomed by a downward path, a path to the valley of the Inferno—grandly, grandly handsome! And the stars had surveyed him through a double eye-glass, perched at the summit of a stick. And the 'crimson flowers' had parted to repel him with an accent, with a vapid sentence. Her gait almost a jaunty swagger; the bearing studied—artificial non-self-consciousness, tinged with the supercilious; her momentary pause in front of portals which the hotel servants, with bowed heads, threw open wide; and then the sweep of movement as she passed through.

'This is either acting,' commented Mr. Herbert, with astonishment and irrational anger—'either acting or—the incredible. What! Does she wish her costume to suggest her play of limb!'

They had ascended to a suite of rooms overlooking the Rue de Rivoli. On their entering the private drawing-room an English maid adjusted the window curtains to subdue the light. Mr. Herbert endeavoured to broach the subject which engrossed his mind—the tragedy, of vital concern for them. But at the first phrase he was checked. Mrs. Ormond-Weir was most pleased at their chance encounter, but could listen to no business matters. News of the gravest import? Mr. Herbert would, pray—pray, not persist. Later—when we had rested, perhaps—but for the present—— Would Mr. Herbert prefer to make another call? Would he stay to dinner? Really—just now——

'Maud——'

Mr. Herbert interrupted rather sternly. It was impossible to defer the business which had brought him hither with the utmost promptitude. He added, in an undertone, that the personal *convenience* of Mrs. Ormond-Weir herself might be affected by the events of that morning and of—yesterday. For all answer, he was treated to a haughty stare.

'Tell Maud to come here, Andréa.'

'Now—immediately?' Madame Bertaux's French accent in pronouncing English words was of the slightest, but it struck Mr. Herbert as more noticeable to-day than formerly. 'If there is a serious communication which Mr. Herbert would desire to make?'

'Most serious,' he repeated hurriedly, 'most serious.'

'I cannot listen for the present, if you please.'

She had sunk into a cushioned fauteuil. With her head poised as in the photographs, her eyes adroitly veiled by their long black lashes, the smile arranged for the photographer's studio, unclosing the fresh, full azalea bud, she barely deigned to agitate the startling fan in black and red feathers which she clasped lightly between the fingers of a long black glove, embroidered red. The ostentatious provocation of her smile chilled him and sobered him; it was as if she had spoken vulgarly. Self-possessed and business-like again, it was as the legal adviser of the Ormond-Weirs that Mr. Herbert prepared to make his statement of fact.

At the same instant, Miss Maud came to her sister's side.

'Am I in the way?' asked the young girl.

'Nonsense, dear,' said the elder sister, turning towards her. The movement involved the turning away from Mr. George Herbert, as the latter very clearly comprehended.

'I thought you were talking business?'

'Certainly not.'

'I have engagements of my own, Mrs. Ormond-Weir,' announced the representative of the family solicitors, 'and I am afraid I cannot remain very long with you. Nor can I call again until to-morrow after lunch. It may then be too late for the business which I wanted to place before you.'

The eyebrows and the fan rebuked him for his rude insistance.

'Oh!' Miss Maud rose hastily, with heightening colour —'Eve!'

'She is not well, sir,' murmured Madame Bertaux, taking Mr. Herbert aside. 'Since this morning she has been profoundly agitated. I was obliged to seek medical assistance. The communication of which you speak——'

'Refers to the inquiry,' responded Mr. Herbert under his breath—'the case of Allan Garth. We have found Allan Ridgway Garth.'

'In bizarre circumstances? In the Rue de Caen?'

'You knew?'

'We called upon him ourselves last evening.'

Mr. Herbert hesitated. Half an hour earlier this calm avowal would have astounded him. He longed to demand point blank, 'What were the circumstances of your parting with our friend?' or to reply curtly, 'You know then that Allan Garth——' What—what should he say?

'And we were to revist him this afternoon.'

Guiltless—as he had well known, as he had well known! He had shrunk from the task of questioning a defendant; he need ask no questions now.

'She was not well enough, however, to support another such interview, and I dissuaded her. She was nervous, feverish, overwrought. We have just returned from the physician's. Presently she will be more herself.'

'Andréa——'

'If you could remain without appearing to remain, expressly——'

'Andréa, Andréa——'

'Remain,' whispered Madame Bertaux; 'she will forget that she has treated you at all brusquely.'

Might he trust this Frenchwoman's word? It was nothing that she withstood his gaze. Liars could look you steadily in the face—and lie, and lie. Conscious innocence could lower its eyes, wounded—confused, even—by suspicion undeserved.

'I will not have you so slight my wishes!' Evelyn spoke with an outburst of febrile vehemence, and in her sudden movement there was a child's petulance, a passionate woman's temperament. You are discussing together these very matters which I say I will not——'

'*Mon enfant! mon enfant!*'

Madame Bertaux went to her, muttering a request as she passed Miss Maud. This middle-aged, gray-haired Madame Bertaux, frigid of manner, harsh of exterior, seemed just now, with her soothing tones and gentle caress, the most truly feminine nature of the three.

'Andréa says I am to talk to you,' began Miss Farrar—too cheerfully, thought Mr. Herbert. 'Shall you stay?'

'It would be better, perhaps.'

'Shall we go into the hotel drawing-room opposite?'

'Yes, if you like.'

'There's an old gentleman who reads the "Peerage" every afternoon; and a deaf lady who goes to sleep.'

'Would you not wish to remain with your sister?'

'Oh, I should only be in the way.'

'But——'

'Oh, I've nothing to do.'

Mr. Herbert glanced again at the contrast in the clear half-light: a matron's figure; the coiffure French; abundant, iron-gray hair; masculine features; the eyes dimmed; the eyelids dun, wrinkled, and weary: at the contrast; a raven-haired, white-browed, dazzling Eve, not yet in her complete efflorescence; dressed with the diabolical art of suggestive simplicity; the scarlet fading from her cheek; the expression soft, relieved—as if the semi-recumbent form were that of a feverish child, hushed, yielding, and at rest.

'She is another man's wife,' he meditated, accompanying the young lady across a wide corridor, and thinking of her sister—'and, thank Heaven! I can never fall in love with her.'

In the circumstances, the sentiment was scarcely representative of much that belongs to modern ethics. Mr. Herbert himself, indeed, had most probably mistaken for conviction that which was merely hope.

CHAPTER XI.

'But perhaps *I*——'

'Oh—I beg——'

'Perhaps you want to *think* ?'

The young lady's face was clouded with solicitude for the articled clerk of Gray, Longley, and Gray, gentlemen of the law.

'No—really——'

'Oh, that poor, dear old gentleman! What *is* he looking for? Why, he hasn't got his "Peerage"! And he can't find it. Poor old dear! I've a great mind to go and help him. What would he say?'

'Oh——'

'Isn't his white hair beautiful?'

'It's a wig.'

'Oh, it can't be!'

They moved slowly, side by side, along the centre of the lofty hall. On the thick carpet their footsteps fell noiselessly. Long mirrors on either hand reflected the two figures as they went by, repeated them in a sharp light, carried them together through lessening vistas, framed them in a far miniature—relinquished them, seized them again—brought them together at the end in a distinct miniature, unattainable.

Glancing simultaneously in the same direction, they noticed the same effect. That moment one of them remembered afterwards—remembered it never after to forget. Unattainable, that far-off picture of two forms: youth, earnestness; youth, buoyancy: was it the prevision of a lesson to be taught by years to come—the Unattainable!

The ire of the white-haired old gentleman should have been dreadful to behold. His pince-nez either mocked him, all aslant, or tumbled from its proper place, eluded him, and swung. He could not find that 'Peerage' just before; and now it was the pince-nez.

'I cannot let that dear old goose be angry. He doesn't know that he put his own newspaper down upon the "Peerage."'

Miss Maud quitted her companion, and impulsively joined the venerable student of noble truths. With a very charming smile, she bent forward, and touched the crumpled newspaper.

'Excuse me,' snapped the old gentleman, grasping at that object. It was his very own.

'Your book——' said Miss Maud.

'Eh?—oh!—oh!' An artificial sort of style, he had. 'Dear me! I am obliged to you. Thank you. Thank you.'

A pretty girl, thought Mr. Herbert. Odd contrast with her sister. 'One was dark, the other was fair—La, la, la, la—la, la—la, la!' Offenbach? Couldn't recollect. Type of pretty English fair girl. Sister—statuesque, strange: dark eyes that blazed at you, and certainly did upset your nerves—not when she peered at you through an eyeglass on the top of a stick, however. Eve? Juno! Bah—Melusina! What day was it?—This—very pretty girl: breath of fresh air, pure air: English type: statuesque too, some day: liked the way she had gone to put that old tuft-hunter right: what a book to read, the 'Peerage': wasn't in it himself, that was clear: and so this fair girl was the 'dark' sister——

'How kind of you to take so much trouble,' observed Mr. Herbert, as they resumed their saunter.

'It *is* a wig,' replied Miss Maud, with bated breath.

'Gone down in your esteem?'

'Well'—Miss Maud cast up the pros and cons—'he has deceived me.'

She had reached the end of the room, and turned back.

'But he never asked you to believe that it was real!'

'Then why does he wear it?'

'Not for either you or me.'

'Yes; for everybody.'

'I mean, in particular.'

'But it *must* be to deceive somebody!'

'Well?'

'And that's deceit. And there's paint on his face.'

'Oh—poor old boy! Was handsome in his youth, most

likely; a "fine man" in middle age; in love all his life with his own looks; other people in love with them, too; can't make up his mind to part with them. Why, his eyebrows are dyed black—I can see it from here.'

'Oh, Mr. Herbert, what a shame!'

'What—a shame?'

'To say that.'

'It's true.'

'If it's true, then, it's deceitful!'

'You're too hard. His literature wouldn't be crowned by the French Academy; but as for his little personal vanities, let us make allowances. Now I come to look at him, there's affectation in his dress—and moustache dyed and waxed. Poor old boy! Has been idler, or toady—cursed with good looks.'

'Did you say—about good looks——'

'Yes. And why? Narrowed his mind. But it's not his fault. It's the fault of other people—of everybody who has preferred, admired, or flattered him for his good looks. Yes, now I look at him, he must have been handsome as a younger man. Bowed in the shoulders, now, poor old fellow; wheezy in the autumn; stays indoors all through the winter; more selfish than a dozen others, or a score; knows the "Peerage" by heart, and is always reading it; knows a good many members of it——'

'That old gentleman does, do you think?'

'Most likely.—Gone down in your esteem?'

'Oh, not at all!'

'Ah!' said Mr. Herbert.

'Oh!' exclaimed Miss Maud. 'Oh!—oh!'

They took a few steps on in silence.

'Not fair, Miss Farrar, was it?' resumed Mr. Herbert, his mind beginning to revert to her sister.

'Yes, it was fair.'

Presently it would be *her* voice that he should hear. How should he break the news to her, that her friend since childhood, her lover, Garth, the Englishman of the Rue Caïn, had died by foul play, and that——

'Tell me some more about him.'

'More?'

'I thought he might be someone who had once been something grand, you know—a character on the Continent

—somebody in diplomacy, I thought—or music. His face was so very interesting from the other side of the room, and then there was his long white hair. "Poor dear old thing, you are not very well," I thought; "but you've been something celebrated on the Continent, I feel quite sure."'

'Perhaps. You never can say. Handsome Jack This and Handsome Tom That get on everywhere without much effort. But, after all, Miss Farrar, what do I know about him? I may be wronging the poor old gentleman, simply because he makes his face up and looks like a tuft-hunter. Why shouldn't he make his face up? It's his own—and he may make it up to please somebody whom he is fond of.'

'You seem to have known him.'

'Oh, don't take my word, really! A fancy sketch. He was before my time, you know.'

'Yes.'

Miss Maud looked in a mirror before them at the reflection of Mr. Herbert, as if she wondered what his time might have been—what might his age.

How should he tell her that an inconceivable suspicion had descended on herself—how prevail upon her to confront the situation, and debate it calmly! She would soon recover, Madame Bertaux had assured him. Her ailment? Would she recover soon—or at all? Her ailment: he had never known her to be ailing. Nor, just now, for even one who, as he did, understood something of the tempest that raged beneath the impenetrable pride of the exterior—a volcanic nature, he said, surrounded, enslaved, striving uselessly to free itself from the vulgarest of spells; inspiring headlong passions everywhere, except——

'Then you don't like good looks?'

'Oh, I beg pardon. On the contrary. Don't you?'

'Yes, *I* do,' said Miss Maud. 'But then I don't know the world. You think they are—not a blessing.'

'Well, you see, one can trace so many miseries to them—and so many uselessnesses, too. Lives that might have been inspiring or useful—idle and silly, or wicked; other lives, useful, or full of promise, thrown away on their account. Jealousies, vanities, selfishnesses, crime, tragedies: just think.'

'Thank you for preaching to me.'

'You drew me into it. But I don't say that my views

are right. You will find it all out for yourself; and you may find out that I am wrong.'

'Oh no, you are not. There's history.'

'And yet, knowing all this, instead of mistrusting good looks, we give them the preference, and we are always inclined to trust them.'

'Yes.' Miss Maud looked again into the mirror in front of which they turned to retrace their steps. It was not her own image, however, that she regarded. 'How that old gentleman is glaring at us!' she whispered; 'we seem to fidget him by walking up and down.'

'He's got the whole "Peerage" to himself,' said Mr. Herbert. 'He can't have the whole of this large room, as well, to read it in.'

'No,' acquiesced Miss Maud dubiously—'no, of course he can't—can he?'

There had been no signs of any care, or any mortification, or any concealment, and, nevertheless, *her* countenance just now betrayed some new experience, he had thought. Temptation of some kind was encompassing her. That exacerbescent irritability had been partly assumed, but was also, no doubt, in part uncontrollable. Dangerous, under the conditions—doubly, trebly dangerous! Strangers might be very soon reading criminality of actual deed where he himself hardly ventured to conjecture birth of criminal resolve. Trebly dangerous, under the circumstances; because if M. Renaud——

'Perhaps you don't want to talk?'

Mr. Herbert lapsed unconsciously into a drawl.

'I, Miss Farrar! Oh, charmed!'

'This is the first time I have ever been in an hotel.'

'Really!'

'Yes; and I like it.'

'You like the hotel?'

'I mean, in general. I should like them all, I think.'

'M—m——'

'No?'

'Depends.'

'Oh, I am sure I should.'

'Why?

'You see so many interesting faces. No, I don't mean that; I mean—the characters you meet.'

'Characters?'

'Yes—don't you? At the *table-d'hôte*, and—well, I don't know; but, at our school, all the girls used to be interested in the descriptions of the characters at a Continental *table-d'hôte*. Novels, you know.'

'Whose novels?'

'Oh, Mrs. Carnaby Royster, Dr. Weakle, and by the authoress of "Fay Flossie."'

'Did you like those books?'

'No, *I* didn't. Nor did many of the girls. But the head mistress used to say that the authoresses' descriptions were full of masculine colour, and clever. Does it matter so very much, then—I mean the colour—who does it?'

'Oh, a great deal. Lots of ladies can sit opposite a perfectly honest man—a grocer, or a commercial traveller, or the landlord's brother-in-law, a thriving master tailor—and imagine all sorts of terrible things, dramas, and dreadful intrigue. Depends on a scar on his forehead, or the way he sends his cutlet back, or frowns at his wine. You get a lot of feminine analysis of masculine character in that way; and it's always very clever.

'Oh—grocers?'

'Yes; not villains at all.'

'But *characters?*'

'We're all characters.'

'But Eve—my sister—says that in society you always meet the same types: when the people are not rich or titled they are always trying to be taken for characters; whereas, out of society—that is, if you dine or dance or stay at a place that isn't in society—you know what I mean—you meet the characters themselves, and they'd be very interesting if they wouldn't be so often trying to make you believe that they were *in* society. Eve says that, when the true characters *do* get into society, they lose the qualities that made them worth knowing. And yet some of them do all they can to get in.'

'Did Mrs. Ormond-Weir say that?'

'Yes. And, oh, you know, we're here under another name. It's not Ormond-Weir.'

An assumed name: well, the incognito in travel was natural enough for persons who were at all conspicuous figures in society; it was even an affectation with some

persons who, quite in error, fancied that in society or in public life they either had been or still were conspicuous. Crowned heads left their names at home, with care, when they traversed frontiers for a little quiet, or for confidential interviews of State, or—for various reasons; coroneted brows would——

'It's an ordinary name, but which they decided upon, I don't remember.'

—— Put on strange fringes, curls, and crimps: old bonnets: green or cinnamon veils: the hands that had pitched the coronets to the deuce having indited those too terrible notes which, summed up, always came to the same quotation from our 'Boswell's Johnson'—'I'm for a frisk with you'—so it be distant, very distant, from the parish of St. Bride's and from demesnes that lie adjacent. Ah, those terrible, terrible notes! What sums they cost, when the solicitors had to buy them! How awfully they suffered (not the writers, whether coroneted or otherwise; ladyships or ladies: but the solicitors—or the writers' friends) when the notes were read in court. Oh, the writers—the writers stood it grandly in the witness-box! They'd very slowly unbutton gloves that ended heaven knew where. They'd bow to the co-respondent's cousins, try their batteries at the cross-examining counsel, patronize the judge, and languish for the 'gent'men of the jahry.' But a worse type—by Jove, when she'd been so keenly looking through the witnesses' proofs with you, when she had annotated so shrewdly, and had argued with you so deuced well—oh, Lord! the fainting and the smelling-salts variety of the fair co-respondent was worse, yes, was far worse. The notes would start in this way—'Pet;' 'Darlingest' (the superlative; the positive was the petitioner; the comparative had gone to Smyrna——or 'Darlinger' might be sitting in the well of the court, amongst the green-baize bags and the attorneys' clerks, to be ejected therefrom by the usher, as a 'pusson that had no interest in the case!—Imperence!') 'Bow-wow;' 'My Lion;' 'Dearest Punch;' 'Dicky-bird' ——oh, terrible, terrible! Mr. Herbert groaned aloud.

'You are tired of waiting,' said Miss Maud; 'I'm so sorry—but Eve really has been most unwell to-day.'

'My dear Miss Farrar!' expostulated her companion.

'Yes, you *are* tired.'

'I am only too happy to devote the whole of my time to your interests.'

'Shall we take these seats? That old gentleman is looking *so* cross. He can't fix his attention. It's our walking up and down.'

'Allow me.'

'—— Just think!—Grocers and master-tailors, and landlords' brothers-in-law.'

'Oh, other people as well, you know.'

'Characters?'

'Characters?'

'Counts and villains, I mean; people with massive heads; conspirators; operatic singers; Bohemian artists——'

'Where, Miss Farrar?'

'At the *table d'hôte*—I thought it was. Isn't it?'

'Oh, at the *table d'hôte*—well, you do sometimes meet—you don't mind?'

'No, tell me.'

'A grocer who wants to be taken for a Bohemian artist, and sometimes is; an artist who wants to be taken for a literary man, and sometimes is, strangely enough; a literary man who apes the actor; an actor who apes the poet; a poet who plays the philosopher; a professor of moral philosophy who's delighted if you can take him for a medical man.'

'And the medical man?'

'I must quote a young lady.'

'Yes?'

'Everyone of them is a love.'

'Oh!'

'Yes—a love.'

'And the lawyer?'

There was no mirror opposite. Miss Maud found that she was obliged to launch her somewhat mischievous scrutiny directly at its object.

'On that point,' said Mr. Herbert, answering her smile—'I am not a good witness.'

'And what other character is there?'

'Well—there's the journalist.'

'Oh, yes, of course—the journalist. And what would he try to pass for, out of the others?'

'Not one. He often *is* the others—all of them. He's

the man they—perhaps I might say we—all make use of, without ever being grateful. On the contrary, we run him down. He'll have been the means, sometimes, by which the others have got into their places; when they have got there, they forget it; and, to do him justice, so does he.'

'Oh, how nice of him! Poor fellow. Do you know any journalists?'

'Half-a-dozen.'

'What are they like?'

'Tired.'

'Very intellectual-looking, I suppose?'

'Too busy to think of that. I know one who's a first-rate critic, and looks like a farmer, and knows more about farming, too, than some of the farmers in the United Kingdom. And heaps of other things. And knows as much law as I do.'

'Oh—h!'

It was natural enough that the Mrs. Ormond-Weir whose name was everywhere—on jars of tooth-paste, on muddy hoardings, on bottles of the latest German mineral water made up in Bermondsey or in Belgian backyards—whose portrait attracted notice to the new medicated hair-brush, advertised so extensively in Paris, Edinburgh, Brussels, Glasgow, Vienna, San Francisco, Dublin, Cairo, Finland, and Wales—it was comprehensible, perfectly, that this Fashionable Beauty, the object of so much pursuit and cheap flattery, at home, the point, abroad, of so many gibes at *cette vieille Angleterre, corrompue et hypocrite*,—it was almost inevitable that she should seek, if travelling, to escape from curiosity, intrusion, 'interviews,' and paragraphs. She took another name, of course; and it was but the precaution of good taste. Mrs. Harris, Mrs. Harryss, Mrs. Haris, Mrs. Harries, Mrs. Hayriss, and Sarah, would infallibly have left their cards upon the celebrated Mrs. Ormond-Weir if—'happening at this moment to be passing through the French capital'—they had caught at her name in a three-line newspaper mention, or a visitors' list. But there were portraits of her in the shop-front of this very street. How could she pass unrecognised! In cities of pleasure, handsome women were not rare. It was not by bevies of fair women, however, that a splendour such as hers could be obscured. On that he had remarked, since

the commencement of her public life, very frequently,—of that, he had assured himself, too frequently, perhaps. That old excavator of ancestries—the fellow in the arm-chair, up to his ears in peerage—was just the sort of irritating sere-and-yellow-tufthunter who ferreted out the incognitos of great folks on their walks abroad. The assumption of a false name had its risks as well as its mere inconveniences. As a plain fact of evidence, it was often damaging. Fortunate, now he thought of it, that Evelyn had employed some sort of personal disguise. But—her errand?

'I have read a good many of your letters, Mr. Herbert.'

'Really?'

The younger sister must remember Garth, distinctly. As a little girl, she had been Garth's eager little friend, asking, for ever, when——

'And I don't like your sentences at all. They don't parse.'

'Oh, my sentences are all right,' protested Mr. Herbert.

'No; you never put any commas, and colons, and semi-colons, and full stops. It's all little dashes.'

'That's our way, you know. Can't help it. Get into the way of it. Legal.'

'Well, it's barbarous. In the holidays, when I have written my brother-in-law's letters for him—the legal replies that he signed—you never saw anything like that. I always punctuated properly. Didn't you notice?'

'Ah, it was your handwriting that came back to us, sometimes, with Mr. Ormond-Weir's signature?'

'Yes; d'you like it?'

'Pretty well.'

'I tried to make it look legal, like yours.'

'Oh, you shouldn't do that. You'll spoil your own.'

'I thought you'd understand it better. But those funny little words that are not in the dictionary, are *so* funny. "Ats." I couldn't think what it meant. It made me think of "a—d—z—e—adze; a cooper's axe!" But I know, now.'

'Yes.'

Well, why didn't he say, 'What?—What does it mean, then?' so that she could say, '"At the suit of." Ah, you thought I should make a mistake!' But he didn't; he wouldn't; he wouldn't ask.

'We came to Paris to look at fashions,' resumed Miss Maud, rising for a continuance of their slow promenade.

A falsehood. She had told that falsehood to her younger sister. You did not go into the Rue Caïn to seek out fashions—unless it was for fashions of murder.

'We were staying with some frends in Sussex, and were to have returned to town to await business news—I don't know what it may have been, but it was business with which you were connected, Mr. Herbert.'

'Ah, yes—business of the estate.'

'But we only stayed in town a day; and then we came on here. We have not seen any fashions yet. This is my first visit to Paris; and it's very pleasant. How bright and gay it all seems! How happy everyone must be!'

Murder? *Bêtise, bêtise!* A return of those idiotically morbid fears. But the motive of the visit here? The motive of her visit with Andréa Bertaux to the Rue de Caen? This deception practised upon her sister? Why bring the little girl into an atmosphere of sordid covetousness, unworthy passion, meanly conventional self-glorification such as that which now seemed to have become for Evelyn Ormond-Weir the indispensable oxygen of her frivolous life? And it was a wrong inflicted on her sister; because in any drama to be played out, if played out in public, it was contriving for her younger sister a conspicuous *rôle*. 'I trace in this,' summed up Mr. Herbert mentally, 'some other hand—the hand of Andréa Bertaux. The more feminine nature of the two, I fancied. Yes; a more femine tenderness; but with the true feminine ingenuity. Miss Farrar was to serve as witness for a desperate alibi; a blind; oh, the motive was too evident.' But it did not follow that—no, of course not. There was a great gulf between mere cautious calculation of the possible and intent towards actual guilt. The credibility of Andréa Bertaux might be shaken in the witness-box, and she doubtless knew it. But the young girl by his side might turn the case.

What case? Well,—say a suit for the nullification of marriage. Given a certain condition of affairs—pecuniary disaster—disappointment in this matter of the Burroughes estate, and the one goal set before himself by Hugh Ormond-Weir would be the Divorce Court.

'He's going.'

It was the elderly gentleman who was going. He shut up the 'Peerage' with a bang, dropped it on the table with a bang, and banged the door.

'How we must have vexed him! What a shame, poor old gentleman! Do you think he would come back? I thought he was quite feeble. What a temper he was in! How he did bang everything!'

'Better those sort of people about,' said Mr. Herbert, 'than eavesdroppers.'

'Eavesdroppers?'

'You can never be too careful. Another man in his position might have caught something of what we have said; although it wouldn't have mattered, if he had.'

'Well, then?'

'Ah, but there are thousands of annoyances—lots of dangers which you wouldn't suspect. There are people who listen to conversations, pick up facts, get a name or two, and very likely call on someone in another person's name, and borrow money, or extort it.'

'Oh, I'll never believe in interesting faces any more!'

'It's risky.'

The will of Elliot Burroughes had been proved under £650,000. For the contingent reversioner, Hugh Ormond-Weir, the death of Allan Garth, intestate, would mean extrication from embarrassments which might threaten a catastrophe from one week to another. Evelyn's earnings on her signatures and testimonials might average for three years about half the pay of the Home Secretary. In about three years—Carteret Gibbs had been quite right—that source of income would begin to decline; and, as soon as they declined at all, the revenues derivable by fashionable beauties from their signatures and testimonials always fell with a dire rapidity. Besides, those revenues would be largely dependent, too, on the maintenance of the very relations and position for which fortune was an essential requisite. Twice the pay of the Home Secretary might have sufficed for the personal expenses of Hugh Ormond-Weir himself—might, or might not—the fact was by no means certain. Thus, the situation stood out plainly. It was quite possible that Garth had left a will; quite possible that the will was in form unimpeachable; quite possible that, with the exception of a few small legacies—a souvenir

to Mrs. Ormond-Weir, to Miss Maud, her sister, 'to myself, perhaps, poor old boy,' reflected Mr. Herbert—Garth had devised the whole of his property to persons of whose existence they had known absolutely nothing. He might have planned some philanthropic enterprise; he might have left his whole property, in trust, for the foundation of a religious mission.

And, by the way, had Evelyn apprised Allan Ridgeway Garth of his recent inheritance?

'I am a very dull companion, I am afraid, Miss Farrar,' said Mr. Herbert with contrition.

'You're thinking over business,' replied the young lady. They were about to turn to retrace their steps once more. At this response Mr. Herbert looked into the glass in front of them, but not at himself. Miss Maud was looking into the glass at the same instant, but was not looking at herself, either. They laughed, and turned their backs upon the glass.

'Well, I know I am a dull companion,' acquiesced Mr. Herbert.

'Do you know any lady journalists?'

Mr. Herbert remembered Mrs. Carnaby Royster, and her journal 'written for ladies by ladies,' that brilliant staff of satirists, panegyrists, and wardrobe-cataloguers.

'Yes.'

'Are they clever?'

'Very.'

'I should like to be a journalist, but is it—well—what I mean is, that you don't hear of people being educated for journalism as you do when it's the Church, or the Bar, or——'

'The stage.'

'The stage?'

'Certainly. I think it takes precedence, now, over the army and navy. A tragedian's wife, if the tragedian should be fashionable—I don't say meritorious: fashionable—goes in next to the Primate's lady. If she's left to herself she might even go in first. And it might be where the meritorious tragedian, who isn't fashionable, hadn't been invited at all—wasn't known, hadn't been heard of.'

'Perhaps he wouldn't go,' exclaimed Miss Maud defiantly, espousing against the whole world the cause of the slighted

but superior Hamlets and Lears; Richelieus and Louis Onzes; leading legitimates in general, ancient or modern—

'Perhaps he wouldn't want to go, if he were asked.'

'Perhaps not. Depends a good deal on his wife, if he's married. Then, if it's contemporary work, as to the author——'

'Oh yes—the author: where does *he* come? I haven't been out at all, you know.'

'Very often brings up the rear. Often comes in behind everybody else, and hopes he won't be noticed. Seen that frequently. If he has written a tragedy, the fashionable tragedian who has spoilt his lines by delivering them in his fashionable manner, very likely allows people to believe that he himself put in all the best things. If he should die, all of a sudden, fashionable tragedian may very likely exhibit marked tendency to arrive at conclusion that author of tragedy in question was himself, fashionable tragedian.'

'Oh—h!'

'And lots of people will back him up in that, if he can only keep silent in company. You might think it strange, but there are lots of people who don't discriminate.'

'Then *you* do?'

'Oh, Miss Maud! Oh, oh!'

'I retract it.'

'No, it's fair. But when I see some fellow shrouding himself in studied silence, whilst other people pay court, I often think of what my friend Garth said to me once——'

'Oh!—Not the Mr. Garth whom we used to know so well?'

A stupid piece of carelessness; he had hitherto been carefully avoiding all reference to the deceased.

'Yes,' he answered—'the same Mr. Garth.'

'Did he ever come back from the East? Isn't it odd that he should like to stay out there! You know I remember him so well, although when he went away to Asia Minor, I was only a little girl.'

'Asia Minor?'

'Yes; Eve said he was travelling in Asia Minor with a Russian land-surveyor, which made my brother-in-law laugh. When we last mentioned him at home, my brother-in-law said that Mr. Garth must be cultivating giant asparagus out there. My brother-in-law said he wished he would come back.'

'Mr. Weir expressed a wish that——?'

'That he would return from his travels. My brother-in-law, who has travelled everywhere, you know, told us that one's life was in constant peril out in Asia Minor. He was most sorry that Mr. Garth had ever gone.'

By many trivial revelations Mr. Herbert had long before divined the despicable petty affronts, the callous reminders of his indifference, the tokens of his revolt against the irksomeness of his bond, which Hugh Ormond-Weir had strewn upon his wife's path since their marriage. Those were the flowers which he had strewn upon her path; and it could not be denied that he was never inconsistent. The same sort of floral gems had been, and were still, scattered by him on other paths outside the confines of the lawful. If Evelyn was to be pitied for her crushed pride and her breaking heart, others—more helpless, and not childless—could not cry out for pity on their broken hearts, because of their dishonour. But for Evelyn to be striving at the amusement of this ladies' hero, to be keeping him in good humour by sneers hinted at an absent man, a love rejected—if anything were needed to increase his detestation of her husband, it was the thought that, through him, Evelyn had voluntarily stooped.

'You remind me of my brother-in-law,' said the young lady, 'and yet you are not in the least like him—you know what I mean—in the features you are not. And he's very bronzed.'

'I don't see how I resemble him, Miss Farrar.' Mr. Herbert could not restrain a hasty glance into the mirror at his side; and his disturbed expression drew a little peal of laughter from Miss Maud. 'Well, I really don't. We're nearly about the same height——'

'He's taller.'

'We've got the same colour of hair, and there any resemblance ends, *I* should imagine.'

'What's the shade? Dark gold?'

'Goodness knows.'

'I always tell my brother-in-law that he reminds me of the character in all the novels in the library at our school—you know—by the authoress of "Fay Flossie," and Mrs. Boanerges; the character who "tugs at his tawny moustache," and looks dreamily out of his violet eyes.'

'Oh, goodness!'

'Well, but—what was it Mr. Garth said?'

'Garth—Garth? Oh, yes; about the Silent Man and Homage. He said, Silence may be the mantle of the sage, but it's also the asylum of the idiot.'

'Oh, but isn't there a happy medium?'

'I hope so. I'm often silent myself.'

'So am I.'

They both laughed; and in the mirror their glances met again. A very pretty girl, commented Mr. Herbert; the frankest manner in the world—the most unaffected simplicity. Her hair was not dark gold, but gold. He did not, for his own part, fervently admire either 'sweet girl graduates' or their golden hair. This insensibility to the 'golden hair' was explicable, perhaps by the dictates of a more or less imperious law of contrast. When you came within range of the sweet girl graduate, often you would find that she was no deserving subject for idyllic verse—that she could be pragmatic, spiteful, slangy—that she might seek to out-talk in their own language fast young sporting men who talked in the language of their stable-boys and grooms. But this little Miss Maud, rather tall for her age, perhaps—what would her age be? Seventeen, say: and a good figure, and a charming smile—it was in the smile that resided her resemblance to her sister—you could not help wishing to be friends with her; you could not help liking her to ask you questions; you never for a moment thought of confounding her with some whom you *had* prattled with on lawns, who *had* played baby-sister at you, and who *had* been arch with such an archness that you wished that you were anywhere but on that lawn—in a dog fancier's pot-house, for instance, drinking sour porter with the fighting potman—'Very good porter, guv'nor—yes, guv'nor—what, guv'nor?—Sour?—Well, just turned a bit, you see, guv'nor, by the thunderstorm, last week.'

Uncle Carteret had demanded, with the disrespect for such matters which was warranted by his years, whether this 'dark' sister of the 'beautiful Mrs. Ormond-Weir' was another Fashionable 'Beauty coming on.' 'If he had used the phrase Professional Beauty, I should have quarrelled with him,' Mr. Herbert declared inwardly. No; the young lady by his side would never follow in those lines; it was

not in her nature. With many persons, celebrity alone might mean happiness; it had not meant the happiness which Evelyn Farrar had looked for; universal adulation could not compensate her for the love withheld, desired; she could not, by strenuous and even hazardous essays, galvanize into a single throb of jealousy the calm, self-satisfied, perfectly trustful, 'fascinating' personage amongst whose devotees she was merely included. She did not know, perhaps, that he was longing to be free; for, once to have grasped that strange fact would have been, with her, surely to have put an end to all imprudences, to bring to an end those perilous incursions into the study of galvanology. He was a worthless fellow, this Hugh Ormond-Weir, born to be adored.

''Tis strange what a man may do,' said Mr. Herbert half unconsciously, after a long pause—during which the 't, 't, 't of an old-fashioned clock seemed to be taking up and continuing the colloquy; ''Tis strange what a man may do, and a woman yet think him an angel!'

''Tis surprising, the magnetic attraction,' replied Miss Maud promptly, but with no doubt an equal unconsciousness, 'which draws people together from ever so far.'

'Yes,' said Mr. Herbert. 'We have been reading the same book, I see.'

'Have we?' answered the young lady.

'And *he* was a journalist, too, by the way; and he wrote in *Galignani*—of this very arrondissement—which ought to be therefore visited, like Mecca. Haven't you read his life?'

'No; I've only read his novels—some of them.'

'Don't you read people's lives?'

'Not for amusement.'

Mr. Herbert digested the response.

'No! By Jove!' he presently exclaimed. 'Miss Farrar—that was profound!'

The young lady laughed.

'You startled me. But you think, then, that girls ought to read people's lives?'

'If eminent men and women have in any way served us; if inventors and discoverers are continually adding to our stock of comforts, opening wider avenues of knowledge, diminishing the sum-total of our wasted time; if physiologists and chemists are to the best of their abilities eliminating

infirmities and alleviating bodily pain; if great writers, men and women, have consoled us, given us courage, urged us on; don't you think it's very little to do in return—the least that we can do; all, in fact, that we can do; but what if they could know, and were still human, like ourselves, they would prize above all that we could offer—to look into their lives, and, where we find that they had troubles, be sorry for them?'

Miss Maud hung down her head, for without either just cause or impediment she had blushed crimson.

'No one ever told me that,' said she very softly.

'Don't listen to me, Miss Farrar,' protested her companion a few minutes later; 'I have no right to hold forth to you, and I am a conceited prig.'

'I have always been at school, you know,' continued Miss Maud slowly, as if she had not heard the protest. 'I won a great many prizes, but they were all for Useful Knowledge. I passed an examination in Sanscrit, Mr. Herbert.' She raised her head and looked at Mr. Herbert with some humbleness; but it was Mr. Herbert who felt rather humble, for he knew no Sanscrit. 'Oxbridge Locals,' she added. 'Since mamma died, I have nearly always been at school. Dear mamma!'

The old-fashioned clock opposite the window struck the hour. Its solemn tones were low, but penetrating—the voice almost of a presentiment. The last vibrations died away; to the listeners the sound still dwelt upon the air, once more, once more: no—they had waited but to catch the warning murmur of the same funereal voice. '*Souviens toi!*'

'Eve wishes to have me with her now——'

Souviens-toi! Toi—toi!—Were they now conversing in hushed accents, so that all else became more audible? Or, was it that a well-wisher whispered them, all at once?—'Our destinies are in hours present. Remember!'

'She missed me, when I went back the last time. My sister says it's time that I was seen. I should like to be with her. She was not at all well to-day. But that notion of being seen—of waiting until people can be pleased with a girl from school—decoyed or entrapped into "seeing" you, pronouncing upon you——'

Souviens-toi! Souviens-toi!

'Andréa says my music is very good—good enough for any *artiste*, she says; and that I speak French so well that no one would think I had been in an English boarding-school. But I should not like to go out very much. And I am sure I should never like society.'

'Try it before you decide,' said Mr. Herbert with something of a forced laugh.

'You read of quite fashionable ladies renouncing society out of weariness and disgust.'

'Yes; and there are gentlemen who retire from society in disgust, too—because they have never been there.'

'I think I am sure I should not like it. With Eve, and my brother-in-law, and you, it's different. And Eve is so very much admired. You see her portraits in shop-windows. But one of our governesses had a toilette-case sent her as a present, and there was a portrait of my sister upon it, painted on ivory; our governess had it painted out. One of the girls came back from the holidays with dozens of my sister's photographs. They were taken from her by the head mistress, until the end of the term. The other girls said it did not matter; you could buy them anywhere for a few shillings. Well, all that—you have no idea how much I thought over that—and other vexations.'

'Oh, but—it was mere jealousy. Mrs. Ormond-Weir is so greatly admired. Don't you know, Miss Farrar, that for the position which she holds in society, thousands of ladies would sacrifice their souls?'

'My brother-in-law said at breakfast once, in joke, that Eve belonged to everybody but herself.'

Souviens-toi!—It was the ceaseless, droning 't'hng—t'hng' of the tall, old-fashioned clock, surmounted by the carven image of unresting Time. In pres—ent mo—ments live—all fates!—T'hng, t'hng! Remem—ber!—ng—h!' The brown, stern, heedless scythe-bearing figure, endlessly reflected before their gaze, ever hastening on, ever rigid, soliloquized in fitful murmurs, heedlessly.

'You are making me a confidant, Miss Farrar,' muttered her companion, 'without knowing if I am worthy.'

'Oh—*you?* Eve told me you were—I won't say what she said.' The young lady looked at him with very bright eyes indeed. 'But I know that Eve would rather trust you than anyone else in—the office of our lawyers. Hugh, my

brother-in-law, has so many claims upon his time. And Eve has so many friends that she does not know whom to select for real advice. Fortunately, we have Andréa, who is devoted to my sister. She had to send Andréa to see me last year at school when I was ill; because people *could not* spare her. It was the season. Poor Eve! She was so repentant afterwards—but the illness I soon got over. It was nothing.' Miss Maud laughed merrily for a moment, but suddenly checked herself to resume, in a much graver manner: 'What makes me think of it is that she spoke of it to me, to my regret and surprise, this morning, Poor, silly, big sister Eve! But I have fears about her own health now!' She hesitated before continuing, 'I was afraid this morning that they were hiding from me how much her health has latterly given way. It cannot be so, Mr. Herbert? How brief!'

. . . . . Souviens-toi!
Maintenant dit: 'je Suis Autrefois—
Remember! Souviens-toi! Prodigue!!! ESTO MEMOR!"

The doors behind them opened. They turned. It was Andréa Bertaux.

'She is better, and can receive you, sir,' said Madame Bertaux, advancing. 'Will you see her now?'

'She is better?' asked Miss Maud.

'Quite recovered. If you will please to hasten, sir. We desire to drive out.'

'Again?' asked Miss Maud.

'A promised call to make.'

The speaker's glance enlightened Mr. Herbert.

'It is useless,' pronounced Mr. Herbert in a low tone, as the young lady preceded them.

'Useless?'

He closed the door, and for an instant scanned the strongly-marked countenance before him.

'You wear crape, Madame Bertaux,' said he, indicating her dress.

'I have worn black since many years, sir.'

'Wear black still, then, for some time to come—wear it for our poor friend!'

'*Ciel!*'

The door was pushed open again.

'Come, good people!' urged Miss Maud.

CHAPTER XII.

As they traversed the corridor, an *employé* of the hotel approached Mr. Herbert, and with an apology addressed a question to him: was monsieur staying in the hotel—pardon——

'No, I am not staying here,' said Mr. Herbert. 'Why?'

For no reason: but, it being one's business—and, not having observed—pardon to these ladies; many pardons. Had assumed monsieur to be a visitor, and had so stated. Wished to make sure that one had answered those inquiries with correctness.

'What inquiries?'

Of the simplest curiosity—pardon, but monsieur would understand that an *employé* was bound to listen to the ladies and gentlemen staying at his hotel: was bound to listen to questions which—pardon: was bound to try and answer them, though—pardon. An elderly gentleman staying in the hotel was curious: liked to know who was who—pardon for the way of phrasing it, but so: followed the movements of the world of fashion. Had asked—just like that—as to monsieur: having, perhaps, met monsieur in the foreign world of fashion!

'Perhaps,' answered Mr. Herbert, entrenching himself unwittingly behind his lawyer's bulwarks; 'what is his name—do you remember?'

It was a Mr. Mowbrey: from England. Very particular about the spelling of his name: 'e,' not 'a.' Had observed monsieur in the drawing-room. Wore his hair rather long; white hair; as for that——! The *employé* smiled indulgently.

'We may know the same people. I shall be pleased to make his acquaintance. Tell him that I should be very pleased.'

Monsieur would favour the monsieur his compatriot with his card?

'Certainly,' said Mr. Herbert, moving away. 'Delighted to exchange cards with him. Tell him so.' The two ladies were at the entrance to their suite of apartments. 'Inquisitive old beggar,' he commented, hastening towards them. 'Just as I thought. Wants to know all about everybody. If he has seen the beautiful Mrs. Ormond-Weir,

sort of fellow that knows who she is, already; sort of old, fussy tuft-hunter who would try to gratify someone by sending an anonymous paragraph about her to Mrs. Carnaby Royster for her "spicy" journal "written by (spicy) ladies for (spicy) ladies." One of the old-lady contributors! Ha! Very likely stick *me* into the paragraph, with some vile innuendo. Gracious Jehovah! What a personage I should become! They would be wanting *my* signatures and testimonials, too. "I have tried your sebaceous tablets and your hair wash, and I really do not know which I prefer. I have discarded all other condiments"—yea, verily, all other condiments!'

The notes of a piano struck upon his ears as he rejoined Madame Bertaux and Miss Farrar. The sound issued from their private *salon*. The closed inner door, hung with curtains—the door of communication between the antechamber and the *salon* itself—deadened the sound, but, in the spasmodic torrents of notes, as they reached him, Mr. Herbert fancied he could distinguish the pianist's mood. His companions listened too, and motioned their English maid to leave them. The pianist stopped abruptly, tried a stubborn passage again, tried it again, ceased, began at the commencement, played through a few bars more rapidly still, and with less accuracy, broke down at the same passage, relinquished the contest, and then wandered off into a slower movement.

'The Fantaisie—Impromptu,' whispered Miss Maud to the representative of Gray, Longley, and Gray.

'Mendelssohn?'

Mr. Herbert liked music that you could remember; but he quoted the great composers with a certain vagueness, as he had once upon a time quoted poets.

'Oh!' murmured the young lady, in momentary suffering —'Chopin.'

'It is months since she has played last,' said Madame Bertaux. Her glance conveyed an appeal.

'That was the *allegro agitato*,' added the young lady, for Mr. Herbert's information—'the opening; C sharp minor.'

The slower and more plaintive movement had been broken off as abruptly as its predecessor. Madame Bertaux led the way into their drawing-room. Evelyn had risen, and was gazing vacantly through the window, up at the leaden sky.

Her visage might have been sculptured marble, the lips

carmined vividly. Mr. Herbert looked on, measuring her strength. A petulant child soothed to sleep, when he had quitted her—and now the hard, self-contained woman of the world, marshalling them with a gesture! There was no tremor in her voice as she uttered the few words which apprised him of immediate demands upon her time. Miss Maud had touched her sister's hand, had smiled, picked up a book, and noiselessly vanished. Andréa Bertaux remained. It would be better to lose no time, thought Mr. Herbert. Her self-confidence assured him. The disdainful brevity of speech which had been so long an affectation with her that it was now a habit, quite natural, encouraged him to seize this moment for the communication of the news, well fortified as their client appeared to be against either surprise or grief, against either anxiety or pleasure.

'Can you support ill-tidings, Mrs. Ormond-Weir?' said Mr. Herbert.

'Yes.'

She knew, then? No; the *rôle:* the obligations of the grand *rôle:* an effect of the superb.

'The tidings are bad indeed,' said Mr. Herbert: 'the worst.'

'Yes.'

'They relate to the—the—Borroughes inquiry. We have traced the universal legatee. We have traced the missing man.'

'Yes.'

'I refer of course to Allan Ridgeway Garth.'

'Of course.'

'You can bear the news—the news which it is my duty to communicate?'

'Mr. Garth, inheriting a large fortune, to which he had no right, of which he had no expectation—Mr. Garth, possessing means of his own which might have permitted him to indulge in some little generosity, even against his conscience and his interest'—she spoke with studied deliberation, and with a studied absence of all emphasis, and this barbed the sneer—'Mr. Garth refuses to save my husband, whose fortune he has usurped; and refuses to save me—refuses!'

Madame Bertaux came forward as if to interfere, but Mr. Herbert checked her.

'You wrong poor Garth, Mrs. Ormond-Weir,' said he quickly. 'Let me at once tell you——'

'I wrong him! I *wrong* him! He knows our wretched, shameful situation. I informed him of it. He knows that ruin confronts us—us! Me! He knows that ruin, irretrievable disaster, disgrace, life-long unhappiness, now threatens to descend upon not, I say, Us—but upon Me! And he refuses—he refuses—to restore to us the smallest portion of what he takes from us by plunder.'

'Good heavens! Will you not——'

'I wrong him!' She started to her feet, suddenly blazing with scorn. 'I WRONG him! Do you know—I pleaded to this man—I—I! I pleaded to him!—this man who—but you are acquainted with our story, Mr. Herbert!'

'Not with the whole of it,' he replied, almost inaudibly. 'Until this morning I had thought the story ended, once for all, three years ago.'

'What do you mean?'

'This morning I was conducted to the strange residence of our friend. There——'

'You learnt that I had stooped to the incredible humiliation of supplicating that man—that coward——'

'*Dieu! Tu ne sais pas!*' Madame Bertaux turned to their visitor. '*Parlez!*'

'I forbid you, Andréa, to interpose. As, too, we are ruined—we? *I!* *I* am ruined: *I* am the sole sufferer: *I* am to lose all—yes, all, all: my hopes: the realization of a dream of happiness which I have merited and never yet possessed: *I* am to be the abandoned! And since it be so, Andréa, pray set the example—you! Be the first to go.'

She snatched up a handkerchief and pressed it—not to her eyes—to her lips.

'Speak, sir!' repeated Madame Bertaux, livid.

Mr. Herbert hesitated, nevertheless. He did not wish his hand to strike a blow.

'This hypocrite, who had no breath in former days, that did not protest, until I loathed his protests, a devotion of his life, his soul!—this egotist, who can dishonestly accept a wealth which does not profit him—dishonestly, because it was not his, but ours—this false *dévot*, who gloats over a base vengeance—my social ruin, my abandonment—who, at this moment——'

'Hush!' interrupted Mr. Herbert.

She faced him with contemptuous anger. He resolved to speak.

'Hush! For I had almost said that he may hear you. And, indeed, it may be that he hears you.'

She arrested a gesture which would have expelled him.

'Those are the most wicked slanders I have ever heard,' continued Mr. Herbert. 'But—what is more to the point—they are slanders upon a dead man.'

Would she fall?—oh, no!—utter a piercing shriek?—not in the least. He need not have made ready to support her to a seat. She stood there immobile, with paling lips: Meropë, thought Mr. Herbert, who was lavish with his similes; the Pleiad who had wedded with a mortal—and what a mortal!

'*Ainsi, monsieur*——' urged Madame Bertaux, with a dramatic intonation.

'See to the doors, Andréa,' commanded Evelyn.

'They are safe. There is no one.'

'Slanders'—she resumed slowly—'wicked slanders—upon a dead man? A dead man?'

There was a pause.

'He is dead, then!' It was no question; and Mr. Herbert proffered no response. 'My dream was,' she went on, absently—'that *I* died, not he!'

A picture: a pretty, pretty picture. Madame Bertaux posed before the doorway through which Maud had disappeared, and watching enigmatically from beneath her knitted brows; Meropë—O dimmed star!—with eyes uplifted, seeking—what? a memory? a departed soul? forgiveness for so much injustice? the brighter rays of sister Pleiads, fled?—Meropë, the photographer's 'new article:' Latest: Very Latest: Afternoon Costume [Tailors, Messrs. * * *]: Profile at Open Piano [Makers, Messrs. * * *]: Background of Exotic Plants [From greenhouses of Messrs. * * *]—Meropë perhaps recalling one dream of the years gone by; the man, with eyes downcast, as though *he* had inflicted wrongs, and sorrowed at them; such was the picture, could it have been seized; a good thing in cabinets; not a bad motive, as the light shot through the half-drawn curtains; a canvas for your next Academy, Sir R. A.—the 'very thing for your engraver;' in the children's album, half a page.

'What are they thinking of, mamma? What have they said? The lady who stands at the piano, and is so good: O is she not good and beautiful, mamma! What does it mean?' 'She is forgiving someone, dear.' 'And the gentleman who is so sorry: what did he do that he is sorry for? And this other lady here—ugly and frowning?' 'You should not say that ladies are ugly, dear.' 'But what does it mean, mamma?' 'It means, dear, that the beautiful lady is forgiving the wicked gentleman. The rest is secrets.' Secrets. Secrets—and temptation, past or dawning?

Through the half-open window floated the faint sounds of traffic in the street below: the crack of a whip, the distant jingle of small bells, the rumble of a ponderous cart. Indistinctly, also, the three personages of the scene could hear the treble shouts of children in the Tuileries Gardens, the monotonous cry of the itinerant vendor stationed within those gardens opposite.

'If he is dead,' pronounced the good and beautiful lady at the piano—'that is no reason why we should not think of him with justice. If he has died so suddenly, it was a punishment.' Her fingers idly pressed down a few notes, a chord from the pathetic movement in the 'Impromptu' thrown aside.

'He was found dead this morning. The affair is already in the hands of the police.'

'The ordinary formal inquest, no doubt, monsieur?' asked Madame Bertaux.

'The circumstances of the death are considered to be suspicious. The police are endeavouring to ascertain the identity of visitors whom he received yesterday, late.'

'Yesterday!' The exclamation was Evelyn's.

'Yesterday.'

'But'—she turned to Madame Bertaux—'*we* were visitors to the Rue de Caen, yesterday!'

'The French police are aware that late in the afternoon there was a visit by two ladies.' Mr. Herbert spoke from a relieved heart, with renewed courage.

'But *I*'—she repeated—'*I* was a visitor to the Rue de Caen, yesterday!'

'Yes.'

'Then—but how did you know? He told you. After pledging his word to me, he has told you! If you—how

many beside! Oh, how base! To compromise me—to divulge that *I—I*—had stooped to clandestine visits: knowing—because in my helplessness I told him all—knowing that for Me it would mean——'

'Oh, hush—hush!' At such a perversity—a rancour so stubborn and unthinking—'Thank heaven I can never fall in love with her,' reiterated Mr. Herbert. 'Thank heaven she is another man's wife!' As this reflection flashed across his mind, he knew that the ground rocked under his feet, and that for a moment the entire scene faded. 'Thank heaven I can never think of her but as another man's wife!' She stood before him, challenging the reproof. 'I can never clasp her hand—and clasp, and clasp her hand! If once our hands, ungloved, should touch, I must say to her, "Let me serve you—I can serve you, but away from you: oh, let us never meet!—I must not have dishonourable thoughts!—Evelyn!"'

'How did you know?'

'When I reached that place this morning,' answered Mr. Herbert steadily, 'our friend was dead. An imperfect inquiry had been already opened. The appearances pointed to suicide.'

'Suicide!'

'That would not surprise me,' observed Madame Bertaux.

'A member of the Sûreté had been sent for. I attended with him at the premises. He pronounces decisively that our poor friend has been murdered.'

'But who'—asked Mrs. Ormond-Weir slowly—'who could have had a motive, a sufficient motive——'

'That, of course,' replied Mr. Herbert, avoiding her gaze, 'I cannot divine.'

'There can be no persons, I should think—here—who——'

'This is terrible news, monsieur,' said Madame Bertaux.

'I cannot but feel shocked,' resumed Mrs. Ormond-Weir—'deeply shocked and pained at such a terrible occurrence. He must have made enemies.'

He must have made enemies! 'Is not this fine, Sir Joseph!'

'The police have been known to commit dreadful blunders,' added Madame Bertaux. 'May—may one ask, sir, what was—how——'

'No, Andréa—no!'

She wishes to be spared everything—thought Mr. Herbert; all the world is to make way for her, and no one must repine; she does not wish to hear of suffering she has caused, and thus her conscience never reproaches her. That long martyrdom has not existed, because she does not wish to know. Garth's unswerving loyalty, through many years—she was free to reject it if she chose; but if I told her of it now she would scout the notion, because, if she believed it, the fact might wake regret, suggest some contrasts, and trouble her dreams. This tragedy itself has been no tragedy. Garth was; and is no more; *et après?* The man Ormond-Weir has killed her better nature.

'Garth loved you, Mrs. Ormond-Weir,' he broke out bitterly.

'I am aware of that, Mr. Herbert—as *you* need not be reminded.'

'And can you find no word of sorrow——'

'You wrong *me* now. Of course this distressing event occasions me the greatest sorrow.'

'Through all those years you never knew our poor friend——'

'Oh, pray, Mr. Herbert—pray!'

'You must forgive me; but to hear these harsh aspersions, when I know—I *know*——'

'Yes, yes; *I* know. He worshipped me, did he not? So do they all. Since I was a young girl, Mr. Herbert, I have heard nothing but that refrain. The same professions, the same protestations, the same entreaties, the same designs, the same offers, the same threats. All these matters would make my life too wearisome, if I considered them. Men have threatened me with their suicides; some may have carried out their threats, for all I know. What is that to me? It could not constitute me their murderess. There is no man who would not wreck his home, if I bade him do so; no man who would not, if I chose, place at my feet his rank, his wealth, honours—yes, and I am speaking of exalted rank, understand me! but on one condition: that I tarnish my own good name, or surrender my own free will, my equal right of choice.' She paused. There was one man, an exception to the sweeping rule, whom they all thought of, perhaps, simultaneously. 'Not one,' she added heroically,

'not one! Well, Mr. Herbert, what are men worth—what have any men who ever lived been worth—that a woman reputed to be beautiful, and loved by them for her beauty, or for her repute, should mourn the death of one or any of them? And the professions which I must say I peculiarly abhor are those of the hypocritical—the would-be insinuating—disinterestedness.'

'There is one man who can serve you,' said Mr. Herbert, very pale, 'and whose disinterestedness is not hypocrisy, whatever you may think of it, Mrs. Ormond-Weir; and he will take leave of you with exceeding pleasure; and if he should be able, as he hopes, to render you some service, it will be at a distance, to be religiously observed, believe me, Mrs. Ormond-Weir.'

'Oh,' murmured the good and beautiful lady, with a strange look at him—'you did not think that I included *you?*'

'And now,' he added, 'I must apprise you of the worst.'

'You are really a most lugubrious caller, Mr. Herbert!'

She struck the piano sharply with both hands, and repeated the chord, with a sort of defiance, '§'

'There were papers?' demanded Madame Bertaux—'A will?'

'A will!' Mrs. Ormond-Weir shut down the piano. 'A *will?*'

'There are documents; but until the authorities here have looked them through for the purposes of their inquiry, it appears to be impossible for me to obtain access to them. The deceased may, of course, have executed a will—and in due form.'

'A WILL?'

The intonation seemed to convey—'This is a pitch of impious effrontery that no human understanding can conceive!' Mr. Herbert watched her with a too visible sadness as she swept from the piano, paused, turned, and, her head well back, regarded him incredulously. The movement had coiled the train of her dress, and it lay in a dark mass at her feet; where she stood, the ray of soft light entering between the half-drawn curtains fell upon her white brow, her black, abundant hair; the marble features, black, straight eyebrows, marble throat, and scarlet lips.

Ten guineas each—a hundred guineas for a dozen—those lessons which she had taken [in *her* case free, gratis,

and for nothing; *au contraire;* what's in a (pupil's) name? Much, much!] from the elderly Rosalind who taught fair amateurs how to speak blank verse [she did it so well, herself!—ye gods!], and whose lady and gentleman assistants prepared all manner of other ladies and gentlemen (in classes for the Dissemination of Mannerism) 'for the stage,'—that hapless British Theatre. He watched her with a sickening mistrust. How much of this was in the *rôle*—the *rôle* of the observed—'observ'd of all observers, glass of fashion, mould of form'? He watched her with wild admiration, wild revolt.

She passed from before the window, moved across the room, returned, and stood again under the soft ray of dying light: easy command in every motion, easy, habitual command and noble grace. In her demeanour—with the head well poised, and with the smile of conquest and assurance which invited curses from ill-favoured beggar-women of her own age on her route—there was the power to harm, the will to harm, the incapacity to reckon up consequences: and, at the same time, an inscrutable addendum from the teacher's art—almost the consciousness of freedom from self-consciousness. The lady pupils of the elderly Rosalind all 'took the stage' like this.

He watched her with the wildest admiration, wild revolt. Serve her? Who would not die for her! Who would not pray for her, and turn away, and cast his body between her form and pestilence! Revolt? Why—who should not rebel or blaspheme at a scheme of life in which a chance proximity, a germ in the common air, an epidemic in a house, the vengeance of an insulted pauper or ejected mendicant, could blast all this!

'I was wrong,' she said. 'There was nothing Providential in his death——'

'Do not listen, sir, I pray of you,' interrupted Madame Bertaux hurriedly. 'You do not know how she has suffered!'

'Not Providential, I mean, for Me—nothing Providential in the death, for us—for Me.'

'Sir—do not pay heed. She has greatly suffered.'

'In her pride, no doubt,' answered Mr. Herbert faintly. 'In her colossal egotism. Yes,' he went on, with firmness —'you can support calamities, I fancy, Mrs. Ormond-Weir. Prepare, if you please.'

'Andréa, bid this gentleman go.'

'Rest, sir—remain! You have sought to spare her; I divined that; what is this menace?'

'Andréa!'

'You are right, Mrs. Ormond-Weir; it was a punishment, but not for our dead, unworthily misconstrued friend. For him it was release. The punishment—for whom was it? For all I know—for you!'

'You are a coward, Mr. Herbert,' said Evelyn slowly, her face and brow flooded with scarlet.

'A woman's answer to unpalatable truths——'

'You are a coward.'

'Perhaps! But for the first time, I hope. And in your interest, Mrs. Ormond-Weir—not in mine!'

'You would not dare to speak thus in the presence of a man.'

'In the presence of a thousand: knowing well that they would all champion you——'

'In the presence of my husband——'

'Above all, in *his* presence!'

Again she flashed at him the strange look he had remarked.

'I am a coward, indeed,' he thought, 'but I must go on. Amongst the papers of the deceased,' he resumed aloud—'unhappily a recent portrait has been found; a portrait of yourself.'

'So many people have my portraits,' was the calm reply; 'so many people like to have them. He bought it, I suppose. I did not give it.'

'Unhappily it identifies one of last evening's visitors.'

'But who, monsieur'—asked Madame Bertaux—'who identifies the visitor?'

'The lodge-keeper of the house.'

'Ah!'

'So that the original of the portrait—which is now in the custody of the police, and her companion of last evening—Madame Bertaux?'—the elder lady inclined her head—'will be soon—if they are not at the present moment—the objects of the most terrible, the most——forgive me if I tell you this; I have shrunk from it with pusillanimity——' He paused. There was no syllable of response. '——They are perhaps at this moment the objects of a suspicion the most inconceivable——'

Madame Bertaux scrutinized him with a manifest terror. He read no alarm on Evelyn's changed countenance—he read astonishment and indignation—no misgiving. But, even as he noted the astonishment which lighted up her features, he remembered—and for the recollection denounced himself—those lessons by the elderly Rosalind and Mr. Knea, the lessons in mimetic resource which had made of Mrs. Ormond-Weir 'the most accomplished lady amateur of the day.'

'I beg you both, ladies, to try to realize what such a situation means. It means that you might both fall victims to the most appalling of errors.'

'How?'

'Suspected by the police—you would——'

'Why, what have *we* to do with it?'

'Can you not see that these ignorant men, acting upon absurd, unjustifiable guesses, might hastily proceed to some extreme step—some measure of surveillance—some measure of publicity—arrest, even?'

'Arrest?' repeated Evelyn, with a smile at the monstrous suggestion.

'That is true,' muttered Madame Bertaux.

'And is that to be my punishment, pray, Mr. Herbert? I overlook your vehemence of just now, in consideration of your friendship for the deceased gentleman—the sincerity of your friendship. But'—she was facing the mirror, studying the image which returned her gaze—'such a notion as that I—*I*——'

'In foreign countries there is the official mind which likes its little joke at foreigners' expense. Your celebrity itself, Mrs. Ormond-Weir—think, think! There is the malice which apologises the next day for an "innocent blunder."'

Une femme comme moi! said her farewell glance at the radiant image.

'Have you friends in the British official world here—may I ask?' continued Mr. Herbert.

'I dare say there are persons here who have met me. I really do not remember.'

'What do you counsel, monsieur?' inquired Madame Bertaux anxiously. 'If we returned to England at once?'

Mr. Herbert crossed to the last speaker, and seized both her hands with gratitude. 'If you will leave for England

to-morrow morning, I can save the situation here. You might travel by this evening's mail, your servants to come on to-morrow, but such an arrangement would now or hereafter bear the appearances of haste, or secrecy, and that must be avoided.'

'Our arrangements are to stay in Paris for several days, Mr. Herbert,' announced Mrs. Ormond-Weir haughtily.

'I implore you!' said he.

'Mr. Herbert!'

Further entreaty was interrupted by the entrance of a domestic bringing a letter.

'Already?' exclaimed Mrs. Ormond-Weir with impatience. 'Am I nowhere to be sheltered from these intrusive people? A card, I suppose?—a horrid card. See who it is, Andréa.'

'For M. Herbert,' said Madame Bertaux wonderingly.

'For *me?*'

That damnable old busybody, the man Mowbrey, thought Mr. Herbert, as he took the letter.

'For Mr. Herbert?—Here?'

'It is totally unexpected, believe me. A messenger appears to have delivered this. I cannot imagine how anyone——'

'At this address?' added Mrs. Ormond-Weir with amazement and renewed anger. 'Delivered at *my* address!'

'Who brought this, if you please?' demanded Mr. Herbert, as the domestic was retiring. The letter had just been sent up from the *bureau* of the hotel. There was no answer, the bearer had stated, on delivering it. The domestic withdrew. Madame Bertaux rose to satisfy herself that the door had been closed. 'I hardly know how to express my apologies,' resumed Mr. Herbert, flushing—'but I cannot understand how this has happened. The note can be of no consequence.'

'It is marked "*Urgent*," notwithstanding,' observed Madame Bertaux in a low tone.

'The whole occurrence is most extraordinary!' exclaimed Mrs. Ormond-Weir. It was an alarming occurrence, too, to judge by her altered expression.

'You permit me?'

'Oh, by all means! You will be good enough, no doubt, to offer some explanation of this atrocious freedom.'

'The superscription runs, does it not, sir?—"*Aux bons soins de Madame Conyers.*"'

Mr. Herbert was obliged to admit the inexplicable fact.

'I had not even been aware,' he protested, with an inward rage against his unknown correspondent—'that you were staying here in that name.'

It proved, nowever, to be no missive from 'the man Mowbrey.' The envelope contained a simple visiting-card, inscribed with a few lines in a neat handwriting, rather French in its character. The name engraved upon the centre of the card might, alone, have warranted Mr. Herbert's consternation.

The name was that of 'Simplice-Jean-Louis Renaud.'

'Renaud!' murmured Mr. Herbert. 'M. Renaud!'

The agitation of his manner startled Mrs. Ormond-Weir herself. At the effect of the name upon Madame Bertaux, her companion, she was doubly startled.

'M. Renaud!' he repeated. 'Culpable negligence on my own part—my chance encounter with you—delay—and then, this!'

'You do not mean, sir, the M. Renaud—the M. Renaud of the police?'

Madame Bertaux approached and took the card from him as if by right.

'Yes,' said Mr. Herbert desperately; 'the Garth inquiry is in his hands.'

'Of the police?' echoed the good and beautiful lady, with mingled dread and suspicion. '"The police?" What have been these phrases, Mr. Herbert—what were these appeals to me—these offers to do me service: what are these plans for hurrying me away, for procuring a clandestine departure? The threats of a punishment which awaited me—oh, I perceive, now——'

'Why, you cannot surely be so unjust'—cried Mr. Herbert.

'Retaliation!—oh, how worthy! And so this was to be my punishment—a punishment prepared by you with the aid of a police-officer.' She swept from him with the cruellest disdain; then, suddenly returning, added in an altered tone—'And *you* could do this! *You* could be so false! *You* could be a hypocrite, like so many whom I never could have wished to trust!'

'Yes—assail me, blame me! I deserve it for my negligence.'

Overcome by his recollections of the morning, and by the

horror of specific fears which had not struck him seriously until now, Mr. Herbert could do nothing but repeat that he was to be blamed—that he was an imbecile, and to be blamed.

'And how cowardly—how cowardly,' pursued that accusing voice, whose deliberate, subdued, vibrating tones filled him with a strange anguish, though to the words themselves he attached no sense. 'To profess—to pretend—that this has happened through an excusable negligence! To make such professions, while striving to injure me! Cowardly—oh, how cowardly!'

Mr. Herbert's repudiation, betrayed in an unconscious whisper, was something to the effect of 'No, by ——!'

The lady withered him with a magnificent blaze of scorn and outraged delicacy. There are looks which, as women well know, greatly pain unoffending persons, and often do wither the innocent for days and days. Your real offender put those missiles into his pocket, with a smile *sous cape;* your real offender can make the finest show of humility, extinguishing the flames, perhaps, with a little gentle dew. But the most honest man can often be rendered speechless, helpless, dazed, confused—at times idiotically erratic, from the most inept of all misapprehensions—by the undeserved or the ostensible contumely of the woman he reveres and loves.

It was presumably for the reason that the character of Evelyn Ormond-Weir had hitherto failed to inspire him with any particular reverence that Mr. George Herbert bore this blaze of outraged delicacy like a fairly practical as well as a perfectly honest man. The pang it caused him was one of momentary irritation: not the deep and dreadful misery which, from either standpoint, can be inflicted, it would seem, by the unjust withdrawal of esteem and faith apparently reposed in us by someone of the opposite sex, worthy of our own faith and our own loftiest esteem. In the present case the stranger might have remarked upon the singular acuteness of the lady's hearing.

'I have been followed,' said Mr. Herbert; 'on quitting the Rue de Caen, I was followed by the orders of M. Renaud. I ought to have expected it! But I had no motive for eluding observation! Renaud has my address; I left with him the English detective who is acting for us.

How could I possibly foresee—I ask you this, Mrs. Ormond-Weir—how could I possibly foresee that we should meet? Our meeting was the merest chance. A minute or two later, and I could not at this moment have known of your whereabouts. I wanted to warn you against this very danger. My notion was to telegraph to London for your address. But who would have known it? To whom could I have telegraphed? Was I certain that you had come on here from your town residence? How otherwise to discover your whereabouts? You are here under an assumed name—that, of course, I understand entirely. But instead of censuring me, you should be regretting your own imprudence!'

'Really—Mr. Herbert——'

'No, no—allow me. It was imprudent to come on here without advising us.'—He checked himself. For the first time her eyes fell before his questioning regard. 'It has been imprudent, again, to make that visit, that first visit—was it not?—to the Rue Caïn.'

The calls and responses of the children playing in the gardens opposite came to their ears with an abrupt distinctness. Abruptly, too, though mellowed by some distance, came the mournful notes of a reed-pipe—announcing a late homeward round. A gust of wind drove against the half-closed window the long leaves of a tall shrub rustling outside upon the balcony. The silken garments of a listener?—the whispers of two listeners?—no—the stirring of dense foliage urged from the outside against the window-pane—the yielding of exotic branches to the chill evening breeze. Madame Bertaux shivered; and closed the window.

'You hear, Andréa?' said Evelyn gravely.

'It was for the best,' answered Madame Bertaux unsteadily.

'What "best," *madame?*' asked Mr. Herbert, just now somewhat pitiless.

These bunglers who did things 'for the best,' and failed, were of all evil-doers in the world the most astoundingly potent; for this, if for no other reason—that you never got rid of them. As soon as they had acted for the best, failed, and brought about the worst, they began all over again, from the beginning, somewhere else.

'It was to see Mr. Garth—to explain to him—to appeal

to him—to tell him that upon a restitution which he could make, eas-i-ly, everything depended—to say to him that, should he decline, we must be ruined and put to shame—that, if he refused, ruin and disgrace must overwhelm us—a shameful notoriety!'

'"Us"?' demanded Mr. Herbert.

There was an evident tinge of suspicion in his manner.

'Perfectly,' said Mrs. Ormond-Weir, with a sort of repressed violence,—'"Us." Andréa and ourselves—ourselves? Two sisters—myself,—my younger sister—Andréa, and the two little girls whom she knew first in their childhood, under their mother's care,—their mother who had faith in her devotion to us, and whose place she has so devotedly sought to fill. You will not leave us, in our poverty, Andréa? The rest may leave us,—but not *you*, in my humiliation?'

Madame Bertaux's response was undistinguishable by Mr. Herbert; but, in the dusk, as they stood together, he could see that she had taken Evelyn's white fingers in her own hand, and was pressing them convulsively.

It was not the moment to assure the Fashionable Beauty that, though she fell, she would never want for troops of friends; that her present renown made up a capital which, if properly invested, would bring in interest sufficing for a lifetime; that there was the Stage to be invaded,—that defenceless British Theatre; that, although pit-and-gallery critics in the large provincial centres would certainly not put up with her unless she showed some competence, in London and the smaller country towns she might rely upon creating furors for, say, some four or five years yet—perfect furors—to be greeted, in fact, as they would say, with ovations; a word which, as you need not remind us, Mistress Epicene, does not come from *ovum*. 'Honour, love, obedience, troops of friends.' Honour she must not look to have; but all the rest might be garnered in from an abundant, golden aftermath. All the rest, with anecdotes into the bargain. Good heavens!—those anecdotes, true or false! It was not the moment to remind her that she need never lack for troops of adoring friends.

Simple Mr. Herbert! You could imagine that she knew not the re-assuring fact! Where is the presumption of the sincere and honest man to end? You would have set your-

self to teach a beautiful and fascinating woman, in the flush of all her triumphs, that she wielded power!

'We are not really, really, in any danger?'

To this Madame Bertaux again replied, with anxiety:

'I did it for the best.'

There was no Act of Parliament which made it a misdemeanour to do things for the best, and fail; but, commented Mr. Herbert, angrily,—'Why is it no indictable offence to do things for the best, and bring about the worst?'

'I could not foresee that he would die so suddenly,' added Madame Bertaux.

'Here is the note which M. Renaud has sent me,' said Mr. Herbert, reading at the window;—'"My agent who has followed you, dear sir, will carry this back to you. If you have departed from the hotel, he will convey this to your own residence. Desire Madame Conyers and the two ladies, her companions, to remain in Paris. Should they decline to accede to your request, count upon us to aid you." . . . . Bear that phraseology in mind, Mrs. Ormond-Weir —"Count upon us to aid you"—that should confirm you in your mistrust of my good faith. Bear it in mind.'

'You are not responsible for another person's words.'

'"We will assist you in preventing their flight." Remember this for ever, Mrs. Ormond-Weir; always remember this against me—that I employed the assistance of detective police-officers to "prevent your flight!" I, who professed such ardour in your cause—I am convicted, am I not, by these few words?'

'You cannot help those words,' answered Evelyn indistinctly.

'"Inform them, dear sir, that for the present we cannot permit them to depart from us." And then the initials.'

'Give the orders, Andréa. We will go to-morrow morning.'

'*Tu n'y songes pas!*' exclaimed Madame Bertaux. '*Tu ne peux pas y songer?*'

'That was the advice which Mr. Herbert gave us,' was the answer, uttered with a sort of effort—an effort, perhaps, at cruelty.

The shaft went home, and silenced its unfortunate object.

'But we are prisoners,' insisted Madame Bertaux—

'virtually we are the prisoners of this M. Renaud. Do you not comprehend——'

'No,' issued in hushed accents from the form facing the darkened mirror—'I—will—not—comprehend.'

'My poor child,' again insisted the other—'you must—you *must!*'

'I will NOT, Andréa!'

In the mirror Mr. Herbert saw reflected shadowy fixed white features and flashing eyes.

'We are in the power of that man, now,' said Madame Bertaux, 'and we must obey him.'

'*Obey* him!'

'Obey him.'

'And if not——'

For an instant Madame Bertaux offered no response. Then, she rejoined, calmly:

'We shall be accused—openly accused—of—murder; we shall be accused of murdering this poor M. Garth: is not that so, Mr. Herbert?'

Mr. Herbert mutely signified his acquiescence.

The dim white face and flashing eyes vanished abruptly, as he gazed at the reflected image. She confronted him:

'I did not hear your answer?'

'It is evident,' repeated Madame Bertaux—'it is too evident. We are suspected and shall be accused. Murderesses!—people will say.'

'They will dare to say——'

'My child, that is too evident. Murderesses—yes, my child.'

'Will they say that, Mr. Herbert—tell me—they will never say that?'

'They may say that—alas, yes!'

'But *you*—you will not allow that to be said of us—of *me!*'

'Oh, believe me——'

Outstretched with a gesture of entreaty, his hands were clasped in other hands whose touch had always thrilled him when he had lightly touched them in the past. He had not wished to play overtly this part of guardian angel. It was the husband's part. Yet, to remind her of her husband would have seemed a taunt. He had not at any moment wished for this appeal; he could have aided her without appeal, as without any hope for gratitude. And the appeal,

at this moment made to him, found him powerless even to earn the gratitude which he had never hoped to receive.

He had not wished, as he felt her grasp relax, to retain in his own those hands which took from him the power to speak—which, apparently withdrawing from him, drew him towards that presence, fading, but motionless, a perfect embodiment of enthralling womanhood. He had not wished to touch even the hem of these dark draperies that mingled vaguely, softly, with the surrounding gloom. He had not wished to remember Garth's words as they had talked, with covert allusion, in the deep night-shadow thrown by the dense tangle of heavily-perfumed straggling plants. No—nor had he wished to remember—oh, base thought! oh, base—base——

The fleet passage of black eider—what brushed his hand?—black down like eider?—lace?—a zephyr?—the fleet passage of diaphanous black beneath which faintly shone a golden bracelet on a marble arm, thrilled him as though the velvet petals of a crimson flower had brushed his hand in a caress. Ah, she had bowed her head, indeed—and one hand was withdrawn from him. She had sighed—and the air around them was an invisible flame. These fingers, too, would have abandoned him but could not, and now—oh heavens!—upon his hand a tear had fallen.

And he had no words to utter, no right to speak! He could not have spoken but as a lover, agonized at her pain or grief; and what words of solace could he have found, when what had filled his heart was thankfulness to her for this revelation of herself! The mask was away from her—away from her that worldly *rôle:* ten thousand times was her loveliness increased.

'We must all die for you now,' said Mr. Herbert, fully convinced that nobody would hesitate.

When the good and beautiful lady answered, she had relinquished the hand which, at the outset, she herself had taken so eagerly.

'A scandal would be terrible for me!'

'It would be terrible,' assented Madame Bertaux.

'I cannot realize it! With my position in society!'

'It would be terrible!'

'So many women would be so pleased——'

'*Cela est vrai!*' assented Madame Bertaux.

'So many men whom I have flirted with would be so gratified——'

'Oh—men!'

'So many people are so mean, so mean—mean—mean!'

'It is terrible,' concurred Madame Bertaux. 'But you could not have foreseen that this would arrive to you.'

'Why should people triumph over me? How can women be so mean, so unsisterly—how can men be such cowards! I cannot have injured so *very* many of them. And I have a good heart! If I have injured them, I am sorry.'

Madame Bertaux rang for lights. Mr. Herbert then asked for an appointment for the following day. He should call upon M. Renaud in the morning. Immediately upon the close of that interview, he would return to the hotel, with whatever fresh intelligence might have been obtainable as to the position of the Garth inquiry.

So many thanks: to-morrow, then: to luncheon?—no?—after luncheon, then: that would do, excellently. Evelyn did not once glance in his direction. The *rôle* had not been cast away. Was this the impassioned woman of a moment since? Tears? What tears had ever fallen from those eyes? Had she shed tears when at her mother's death-bed? She wept her injured pride, perhaps, just now—perhaps the faithlessness of one man: but—weep for her own faithlessnesses to one man, now dead—for her own injuries to many hearts, those of weak men, honest wives?—never!

'And pray, Andréa, who is this M. Renaud?'

'A man to be feared,' answered Madame Bertaux nervously.

'A man to be feared?'

Her lip curled with scorn; the colour mantled to her cheeks. To be *feared?* What man was this to be 'feared' by her, when *she* was feared by all of them!

'I know not if Mr. Herbert be of accord with me?' added Madame Bertaux.

'A man to be feared,' declared Mr. Herbert, 'and a police-agent to be obeyed.'

'You alarm me beyond measure,' observed Mrs. Ormond-Weir pleasantly.

She was again before the mirror, lustrous beneath the rays of tall shaded lamps and rose-tinted wax-tapers. The assured regal smile dawned again. She returned his parting

salutation. Mr. Herbert looked once more; and it was the picture of a priestess worshipping at the bright altar of her own saint, a sophisticated Circe in full adoration of her own spells, that he bore away with him as he departed, full of misgiving, mistrust, compassion—jealousy.

CHAPTER XIII.

On quitting the Rue de Rivoli, Mr. Herbert recrossed the Place Vendôme, traversed the main boulevard, and turned into a quiet by-street. He stopped before a building that stood back several yards and was approached through a small garden badly tended. In the centre of a ragged grass-plot, a satyr, out of repair, pursued a defective nymph. The statuary's art had likewise furnished for the four corners of the little garden very striking studies of Force and Grace, with clusters of luscious fruit. There was something lacking from the primitive grace and force of all these studies; and Time had consumed a portion of the fruit. The stone steps at the entrance to the substantial structure were not quite free from moss or mildew. A footman held himself erect just inside the vestibule. Cytherea faced him, in a niche: this was a work by the illustrious first president of the club. Another footman held himself erect at the far end of the vestibule, just outside a glass-door that swung noiselessly upon its hinges, either way, without his intervention; and, in the niche opposite this second footman, a bronze Harlequin—the remarkable work of the existing president—threatened with his transforming wand all members and the visitors, their guests, who entered there.

This was, for the most part, a club of people who had succeeded in art, politics, letters, and finance. They called themselves Bohemians, and they took the art and letters of the whole world under their protection. Few of the native members were linguists, and those few were the politicians and financiers; and few among the politicians and financiers had the courage to talk foreign literature, here, when they happened to be acquainted with it, or to buy foreign works of art. It was the most singular of affectations, the Bohemianism of this club. No present member of it would have ventured to inhabit a Bohemian quarter; and although

there were some among the painters, architects, and sculptors who in former days had really lived the true *vie de Bohéme*, they had cut their old friends, the true, the dreadfully true Bohemians, in the strangest manner as soon as they had seen their way to fortune, to the society of financiers, and to fame. The functions of the mercantile and banking members of this club were limited to purchase of the members' works, expenditure at the gaming-table, administrative labours in the committee-room, and acquiescence in the vagaries of club debate. The arrangement must have satisfied everyone; because, outside the club-walls, the financiers boasted of their artist-friends, and the artists boasted of their friends the financiers.

To a certain extent, the club was cosmopolitan. It contained, also, the customary indigenous admixture of distinctive individualities and cliques apart. There were notable members of this club whose successes had been conquered in vocations that were neither literary nor artistic, neither banking, mercantile, nor political. There were others who had met with neither failure nor success; the latter being above their powers, the former below their cares. Two reasons were assignable for the membership of Carteret Gibbs: the one—from his own personal point of view—that he was a wealthy man who liked to think that he was a Bohemian, and could hurl the Bohemian jest about with Bohemian recklessness and sparkle; the other—from the standpoint of the club—that he bought works of art by contemporary masters, that he had presented the International Hospital with beds, to bear the name of the club for ever, and that when, some years before, he had been put in nomination, his proposer was a Marquis, and his seconder a Duc.

What particularly characterized the art and literary pontiffs of this club was the decisive promptitude with which they awarded the verdicts of posterity. The stranger within its gates would hear of many names as strange to him as he to the wearers of them; but they were all names that 'echoed round the world,' he would be given to understand—names that the world was eagerly engraving across its tablets of the newest brass; whereas he, perhaps in his own land a pontiff, too—the pundit of some cenacle near Garrick Street—would be but a degenerate trifle, here, a

curious Hyperborean particle of soot and fog, times and seasons having changed since Herodotus. We have read of others who took

> 'The rustic murmur of their bourg
> For the great wave that echoes round the world;'

and we can find these bourgs in the middle of big Babylons —yes, in the centre of the 'city's great heart'—which may be one of their great phrases for themselves. Who says that times and seasons have not changed? Who says that men are not prophets in their own countries? Who can say it—when the majority of the prophets whom we hear vociferating are prophets nowhere else?

Go where you will, the prophets dog your steps and overshadow your life. That little fat-faced, weak-eyed, sandy-haired London newspaper-man, whom, through the intermediary of Allan Garth, Mr. Herbert had known for some years past, never omitted in the morning, when he said his grace before his breakfast, to add the quotation from Sainte-Beuve for which, he could aver with profane violence, that author had indeed earned canonization. Holy Sainte-Beuve! And thou shalt not be squeezed into the calendar! *Le rôle de prophète ne sied guère qu'aux ignorants!* Of which awful verity the rotund, sandy, and spectacled small man, employed for common use two rather liberal renderings: the first, 'Only the ignorant predict,' for the instruction of his three children (two bloated but studious boys; and the sweetest of young ladies); the second for a late hour in the smoking-room, when he would say, 'Of all the political'—it is needless to be textually exact—'there is no political'—better than a textual exactitude may be a wise discretion —'like the political'—the forgoing observation, in parenthesis, will again apply—'who prophesies, and prophesies, and goes on prophesying!—who tells you that the babe unborn shall rue!—who tells you what the generation to come after us will think of us!—who tells you that the day will come when——!—who tells you to mark his words, and repeats those maddening words for you to mark!—who assures his political opponents that they will inevitably come round to his opinion!—who profits by the absence of the proprietor to trespass on the domain of Posterity, and to steal from the preserves!'

But as for the 'political——,' the oracles of this club

seldom bothered themselves about party politics. It was not that they were indifferent to the welfare of the masses, the glorious cause of freedom, the eternal principles of right and justice—not at all: they were quite prepared to give much thought to abstract questions of all kinds, and to treat them conscientiously from the point of view of art. Plenty of new pictures and new statues; plenty of solid new operas; plenty of new prose and verse; fiction and idyll: such would have been their treatment for the mishaps of the masses, and the glorious cause. And perhaps the masses in at least one foreign country would have liked it if they could have had it tried.

Mr. Carteret Gibbs was still, in general topics, one of those ill-natured persons who at times take the liberty of thinking for themselves. On questions of Parisian art and letters, however, he had insensibly been drawn into the vortices of ready-made opinion which, all round him in this association of successful men on the defensive, hissed and bubbled and seethed. 'Ill-natured,' we say advisedly; the crank of wishing to form one's judgment without let or hindrance, the habit of forming one's own judgment independently, being a well-known sign of ineradicable ill-nature. Let A. B. ask his wife if this be not so: Mrs. A. B. possessing renowned cousins, men of light and leading, whose merits don't happen to have particularly dazzled Mr. A. B. Could *you* have done what they have done, A. B.?—'I might have married one of them'—or could you do it now? Why, certainly not. You admit the fact yourself, A. B.! Well, then——'

Ah! they were in the confidence of Posterity, these Parisians, the fellow-clubmen of Mr. Carteret Gibbs, art and literary pointsmen at the bifurcation of the great metal-way, the grand railroad of Effort. They told him what Posterity meant to honour, and they told him to be in time. He listened, and he bought, and he repeated what they told him. He had ended by living, just like everybody else subjugated by the same *genius loci*, the very narrowest of all narrow lives for people who like to say that other folk are narrow—expectation of some flattered pontiff's lazy labour—expectation of the fashions that depend on someone else's freak—expectation of 'that next portrait for the Salon or the Academy: that volume of lyrics for next season: the blank-

verse tragedy for the Pall Mall Theatre, or that one-act rhymed comedy to be sent in to the Français: the next harmonies by the *jeune maître* who composes or compiles his operas in sylvan retreats inaccessible save to the Muses (ninety-nine they are; well-favoured are they; of various nationalities they are, enamoured of Parisian fame; smiled on by the Master are they all; and they are all content; yea, though they be nine hundred, ninety-nine; and though the *jeune maître* glance but once upon the new feather in the new hat; the hat which poor Albert pays for; honest Albert, at the office; a clod, is honest Albert).' Old Carteret Gibbs, who had once been fonder of English field-sports than of Parisian art and letters, had ended by drifting helplessly along the narrow channels of his club. He venerated the pontiffs of the club now; gossiped about their projects and their styles; contradicted people upon details of the pontiffs' private existences. He was living the life of appetite for second-hand opinion upon art and letters; greed for priority in the retailment of frivolous news; emulations in the faultless accuracy of that knowledge which deals with surreptitious ties between persons the most uninteresting in the world.

And what were all these pontiffs, about whom our British resident, patron of art and letters in the French capital, and 'unable to stand anything at home'—but, first, the Sundays, then the politics, and, next, the climate—concerned himself so industriously? They were heads of coteries that bickered; they were prophets in their little bourg; they were pontiffs who were utterly repudiated in another club for artists and men of letters on the other side of the boulevard. On the Rue Volney side of the boulevard was a club which, without posing for anything at all, would now and then help along some struggling man of merit who was to be picked up, a competitor, in real Bohemia. This other association of successful men had more than once 'discovered' some obscure 'talent.' They made no fuss about the matter; they purchased the picture or the marble group, and they lodged it in their gallery; and it remained there, in permanent exhibition. There were pontiffs in this other club, no doubt; but they were sedate, and courteous; and on the whole, they left Posterity to itself. Indeed, to foist upon us the foregone conclusions of posterity may be an unwise as

well as an unwarrantable proceeding. We may, ourselves, chance to be so situated that we can retort with perfect confidence, based upon superior enlightenment—'The verdict of posterity will be nothing of the kind.' We may chance to know perfectly well what the verdict of posterity will be. If anybody ought to know, *we* ought, perhaps. They mustn't tell us that posterity is going to say such-and-such a thing, because what posterity is going to say is . . . !

We, too? Even so; even so. Thrice holy Sainte-Beuve! In the good fruit of thy works, O be thou blessed!

Among the fellow-clubmen of Mr. Carteret Gibbs were numerous young and middle-aged comtes, vicomtes, and princes, who, like himself, delighted in the repute of consorting with art and literary Bohemians. Some of them, however, attended the club with but indifferent regularity; the repute of such Bohemian comradeship being chiefly that which fascinated them—not the fact. It was a pity that the foreign princes brought their olive complexions, diamond studs, and imperviable lineage less often to the club than to the Paris nighthouses, or to the drawing-rooms of foreign colonies in Paris, '*pour qui tout prince est beau*,' and desirable; it was a pity, because there was often some fellow-clubman or other, a foreign resident, pleased to welcome them, and to lend them money—overjoyed to walk out with them afterwards just as far as the boulevard, and say loudly to them there, on taking leave, '*Au revoir, prince!*'

The British residents who were fellow-members of the club, with Mr. Carteret Gibbs, included an Hon. or two (there was also an American Hon.—a charming man, said some of his male compatriots: and he really was, as a few Englishmen who knew him put it, 'a d——d good fellow;' but burdened with information, and always willing to transfer it—always dying to impart it, pronounced one of his compatriots, from a different portion of the United States); a retired Government official or two; a martial Indian remnant, whose ruling topics were 'the niggahs up country, out there,' and hepatography. ('We used to make 'em stand up, all in a row—aftah tiffin—aftah dinnah—niggahs—native police—niggahs—and we used to drink brandy-and-sodah—and give 'em money—and pelt 'em with empty sodah-watah bottles—pelt 'em,—the niggahs—out there—ah! you've no ideah!'); one or two bald-headed,

white-whiskered younger sons who for the past twelve years had been going to write their Memoirs or their Travels, works 'of immense value to the future historian;' and an unfrocked High Church curate. The admission of the unfrocked curate had not been procured on his behalf without a good deal of difficulty. It was pointed out by his sponsors, however, that no club of avowed Bohemianism could, logically, show itself straitlaced; and that his offence—*si peu de chose!*—implied the possession of much moral courage. Now, courage was a quality which the club esteemed very highly: and as, when invited in the capacity of guest, the ex-High Churchman had performed with great credit in the fencing-room, upstairs, he was elected, *nem. con.*, at the commencement of the season, before the British residents had come back to town. Mr. Carteret Gibbs had threatened to resign his membership upon hearing of this new election. But the club could have spared Uncle Carteret far more easily than Uncle Carteret could have spared the club. He stayed on, therefore, and by-and-bye the unfrocked curate found in the Parisianised Carteret Gibbs a profoundly appreciative auditor for his diverting anecdotes of past parishioners.

Since he had become infected with the rabies of his art and literary club—intolerance, namely, of all reputations other than the reputations of his fellow-clubmen—Mr. Carteret Gibbs had been subject to mild fits of the conventional longing to 'discover' somebody. More just it would be, possibly, to state that he longed to have it said of him that it was he who had discovered somebody—*he;* to have it said that *he* was the man who had unearthed this talent, or that genius; on second thoughts, talent rather than genius; genius being too ordinary an article, nowadays; all sorts of young gentlemen and ladies being geniuses until they arrived at years of discretion. Yes, when singers, dancers, painters, and sculptors came to the front, he did envy their 'discoverers.' But the latter, although they usually assumed a good deal more than was their due, had, at least, wanting to find a singing, dancing, painting, or modelling talent, taken the trouble to go and look for it; or, when the talent itself came up to them, or hunted them out, they had, at least, shown some perception of its worth. Mr. Carteret Gibbs would repine at times. He had not yet

'discovered' his obscure artist, who was to be great. As for letters, he had himself, when in his teens, composed 'Moral Essays' in the style of Dr. Johnson. He was beginning to care less, indeed, for letters than for art. That young man who called upon him with a note of introduction—the young man from Aberdeen—a young man who had never written before, but wrote like Junius—had disappointed him. The young genius-lady from Boston, U.S., likewise disappointed him—the young woman who had both read and written too much for the capacity of a single poor brain—who 'had read everything,' in fact, and believed that she could write just as well as everybody she had read. It is a phenomenon in literature, by the way, not unworthy of remark—that frequency with which the tyro's earliest productions rival the letters of Junius.

Romantically obscure artist of vast talent, O, where are you? Where art thou, Alice? John (plain John; the Correggios, Michael Angelos, and Benvenutos of the baptismal font are not invariably vaster than plain John), where art thou? Mr. Carteret Gibbs has intervals of zeal, when he would meet with you—would play the patron. For him, or for his relatives in London (call upon them, painter, sculptor, or musician, if you don't mind being patronized), you, John, shall be 'a young man of great promise, whom I found—you would never think—etc.,' or 'a remarkably promising young man, who is most grateful to me;' you, Alice—*you* have only to tie up your yard and a half of chestnut hair in some out-of-the-way fashion (if chestnut hair happens to be 'in'), wear the weird bracelet which the gipsy woman gave you when she foretold the fame which you have shyly credited—and you shall be invited wherever you may want to go, upon the strength of what you have not yet done. Plain John, however, the son of the poor clerk, must work very hard, indeed, with brush or block of clay before even the servants will be civil to him when he calls. If unluckily he disappoint his 'discoverer,' a Carteret Gibbs, in no matter what community, he must expect to hear unkind hints; stories of adventurers and impostors may be recounted in his presence. Let him, on the other hand, achieve, conquer, and be honoured—and his incubus for ever is the genial Carteret Gibbs.

A gray-haired poet of our own time, estranged from the

woman he loved, saw himself definitively deserted by her because of a sudden world-wide success with a few poems published in a volume. We read him; but who knows the story? The desertion broke his heart; her own heart may have suffered, too; he had still wished to win her, and she knew it; if he had failed with the world, she would have come to him; he succeeded, and she went away; what could he do but love her all the more fervently for that stoical, that cruel pride? He has lived through twenty years to curse the world's praise, which, during those years, has but grown.

If he could have failed!—ah, if they could have crushed or wounded him, and left him by the wayside, friendless, or—worse—condoled with by good friends! Then *she* would have returned to him; the world would have changed to Paradise. But that was one more 'not to be.' Women who have parted with a deep love and a life—a life they think of with some tenderness—are sometimes capable of these exalted barbarities, those magnanimous descents. Whereas, who ever heard of a common wealthy art patron, a genial society—Carteret Gibbs, with nothing but his paltry purse and vanity at stake, sticking to his *protégé* in misfortune, comforting him in downfall and oblivion!

First catch your obscure talent, however—the plain John, son of the poor clerk or artisan—the little lad who draws the garish ornaments of the humble chimney-piece at home, the broken jugs, the drooping flowers on the window-sill—the boy who carves the heads of his slate-pencils into liknesses of people whom he knows; save him before mechanical toil can exact and exhaust his energies, rescue him before mechanical associates can immure him and debase him—before squalor lays him low. Seek for him. Where to seek? An obscure talent must be sought for in obscurity; ah, true—you could not find your way. It would be so pleasing to 'discover' somebody—but——. But you take your opinions on art at second-hand; and the discoverers have not precisely been the folk who have only travelled along beaten tracks—have only trodden where they found footsteps by another.

Mr. Carteret Gibbs broke off a conversation upon art, and advanced to greet Mr. Herbert with evident signs of chagrin.

'You are late,' said he. 'Praxiteles was here just now;

and ten minutes ago I could have introduced you to the greatest portraitist in the world.'

'Was *he* here?' asked Mr. Herbert, and the name he added was Anglo-Saxon.

'*He?* No!' exclaimed Mr. Carteret Gibbs—'I should think not, indeed!' And the name he then furnished was Gallic.

'Indeed?' responded Mr. Herbert, concealing his wonder; for he had never heard that name before.

'And that client of yours was in the club just now, too,' added Mr. Carteret Gibbs—'the inquiry, you know—the client upon whose business you are here.'

CHAPTER XIV.

'THAT client fellow of yours who was here just now,' continued Mr. Carteret Gibbs—'came in with a fellow at the Austrian Embassy.'

'A client?'

'The fellow you've come over about—your client.'

'The man I came over about,' said Mr. Herbert, hesitating—he did not know how far he might confide in Uncle Carteret—'was Garth.'

'Ah—did you find him, by the way—were you successful this morning?'

'We found him,' answered Mr. Herbert—'we found him.'

'How de *do*—how de *do?*' Uncle Carteret had stopped to shake hands with a lolling Briton. 'Seen your picture. Great improvement on last year. D——d shame they've skied it. Treat you better at the Academy.'

'Shouldn't get into the Academy at all.'

'Ah? ah—ha! ha! Heard about Maltravers? No? There's not a better landscape in the Salon, and they've—— Oh, here he is! I'll just go and tell him what Bonnefemme said about his picture, and there's no better judge of a landscape than Bonnefemme. This way, George.' They were moving towards an animated party in the midst of which stood a young man with a blonde moustache, a faultless profile, and an exceedingly conceited expression of face; it was Maltravers, a Rutlandshire man, observed Mr. Carteret Gibbs. 'Aha! That's what you don't meet every day!' he

went on. 'I'll be bound you never met anyone before from Rutlandshire, George. Rutlandshire—Oakham. Haven't forgotten, you see. But you have to come to Paris to meet people from Rutlandshire.' He stopped short. 'No; I won't—I can't. I won't tell him what Bonnefemme said in his favour! He's a fellow-countryman, and it's a pretty good family, and I like his French landscapes, and I'd buy this one; but, d—— the fellow, I can't stand his profile, and the way he carries it!—Come into the garden.—There goes the only novelist of the present day who understands the feminine heart—yes, that's the man—young, yet; but Bravejean says he'll rank with Balzac. Not know the feminine heart so well as—who? who? Why, the man you're talking about is a member of the club across the boulevard! Not know the feminine heart? Why, this man will devote sixty pages to the description of a boudoir!—Nice garden; how d'ye like it?—Eusèbe!'

'You are fond of your club,' said Mr. Herbert.

'Changes me, my boy. Different man when I get here! Art, my boy.—Eusèbe.—You take the *apéritif*, of course? That's right.—Serve them out here, Eusèbe.—We'll dine presently, Eusèbe.—Artistic atmosphere, George. Had asked two fellows to meet you. One's late, and the other's called away. Architect of great eminence, the fellow that's called away; French architect; remarkable gallery of etchings. The other's a resident English solicitor; late, by the way; later than you are. A Mr. Shelley.'

'Rue Boissy d'Anglas?'

'You have said it. Know him?'

'He has acted as our Paris agent.'

'Know him personally?'

'Met him once or twice in London—when he has come over, in the ordinary course of business.'

'That little wiry dark man, in the corner—*Comment va?*—*Oui, comme vous voyez!*—is the *Echotier* critic, the fellow that fought the desperate duel last week; could have killed his man, but pinked him artistically in harmless places until his man left off, in a faint. Exposed his own life—for the other fellow meant murder. The Berlin papers jeered at the encounter. A journalist against an army officer, they said, and the army officer gets the worst of it. By Gad—and that little swarthy man with the red ribbon would take

out six of their best Berlin-wool army-swaggerers and run 'em through the chest one after the other.'

'I cannot imagine what client of ours you could have seen just now?'

'Why, the fellow you were telling me about: what's his name, now!—these infernal English names! The Austrian Embassy man introduced us, too. Exchanged a couple of words. What's his name, now—dear me! bless me!'

Eusèbe passed them, bearing a tray which contained a tumbler plainly marked with medicinal doses, a decanter filled with water, and a second—a smaller—decanter half full of a fluid dark brown in hue. He placed the tray in front of a man—spare, wrinkled, and cadaverous—seated with closed eyes, by himself, in a nook at the extremity of the veranda. Eusèbe poured a certain quantity of the dark-brown fluid into the tumbler, apparently measuring the proportion with great care. This done, he touched the man before whom he had deposited the tray—shook him gently by the shoulder, and returned towards Mr. Herbert and his host.

'When does he deliver the score?' asked Mr. Carteret Gibbs, as Eusèbe went by.

'Next month, monsieur.

'It's only under those conditions that he can find his melodies,' explained Mr. Carteret Gibbs to his guest. 'I don't know how many drops of it he can take, now. He fasts upon it. He can fast for days.'

'Opium?'

'By Gad, yes—tincture of opium.'

Eusèbe came back to announce Mr. Shelley. While the latter and Mr. Herbert were engaged in conversation, their entertainer rose and sauntered to the high open windows which gave access from the veranda to the card-room. He spoke to the gentlemen within, loitered, and then rejoined his guests.

'Here is your client, Georgie,' said Uncle Carteret; 'but I can't think of his infernal name.'

Mr. Herbert looked up, puzzled.

'Well, but what was the name we were talking about, George? His wife's name—don't you know: we know her face, but what's her name, again? Leader of society; photographs; beauty!'

At the open windows of the card-room appeared Hugh Ormond-Weir.

In Paris? That man here—in Paris?

On what errand? To ascertain for himself how the Garth inquiry might be progressing, doubtless! Anxious to learn what the disappearance of Allan Garth had signified: whether it had meant death. Anxious to hear that it had meant the death of Allan Garth.

Mr. Herbert walked slowly towards the window. The other, though presumably unprepared for the chance rencontre, exhibited no surprise. Neither extended his hand.

'Good-morning,' said Hugh Ormond-Weir.

'Good-morning,' said Mr. Herbert.

The contingent reversioner was paling, thought Mr. Herbert. Beneath the perpetual bronze of his complexion, the effect, as he stood in a flood of light from electric lamps, became somewhat ghastly.

'The days are getting longer,' observed Ormond-Weir.

'Extremely tasteful, this arrangement for illuminating the garden,' was the reply.

If Garth had left no will—good for this man; in his own habitual phraseology, 'he had got on to a —— good thing:' the Burroughes estate was worth inheriting! The timely death of Allan Garth, intestate, would enrich this man again, and would save Evelyn from a terrible obloquy, would save her from shameful charges, unfounded, but backed up by evidence: two or three strong witnesses, and then—divorce.

'As you may imagine, Mr.—ah—Herbert, I am exceedingly desirous of ascertaining the precise upshot of this Garth affair.'

'Shall I call upon you? Or, in a few words I could place the situation before you here.'

'There is nothing to be done but wait, I suppose?'

'Wait?'

'The beggar's dead: where's the will?'

'Just so,' assented Mr. Herbert, mastering his astonishment—'if there *is* a will.'

'Hope to —— there isn't, of course. But if there *is* one, what does it say?—that's the only question for us now, I take it.'

'Quite so.' Mr. Herbert determined to abridge the interview. 'Do you rely upon *me*, am I to understand, as to

this early information with regard to the presence of a will amongst the papers? Or have you other channels—special, private channels—at your command? It will be convenient for us all to know the result of the search as soon as possible.

'I shall look to you still, if you please.'

'Where shall I address you?'

'Rue Marbœuf. Here's the number.' The speaker searched carelessly in a pocket, and then produced in a handful of odds and ends a visiting-card fantastically engraved with a name which was not his own. 'Residence of name on that card, if you will be so good.'

'I will write,' said Mr. Herbert, glancing at the name. 'Dull weather!'

'Can't last.'

There was a mutual pause before the leave-taking.

Hugh Ormond-Weir began to 'tug at his tawny moustache.'

Remembering the words, Mr. Herbert unconsciously transferred his gaze to the dreamy 'violet eyes.' Well, Miss Maud had exactly hit it. He did look dreamily out of his violet eyes, and he did tug at his tawny moustache. A handsome fellow this, by Jove! And what a frame, by Jove! The right side of six feet, for wear-and-tear; the inch or two under, rather than the inch or two over.

Mr. Herbert had frequently reflected in the past that Nature had bestowed upon this favoured one, this ingrate, the husband of the Fashionable Beauty, one or two of those deceptively engaging shades or tricks of the physiognomy which, when through confidences we have known something about the thoughts harboured by the individuals, and when we have seen the actions which those individuals (passing all the time for unsophisticated, or devoted, or single-souled, 'good,' and, oh! above all, chivalrous) have not hesitated, in the furtherance of private aims, to perpetrate, will sometimes rock to its foundations the whole fabric of our faith and trust in any sort of physiognomical expression whatsoever. Many of us have been disagreeably waked up by unasked or compulsory confidences—by chance betrayals in the shape of negligent opinion—to what are the realities, in contradistinction to the show. In any soiled or tattered costume, in dirt and vermin, and bareheaded, Hugh Ormond-

Weir—so ran Mr. Herbert's thoughts—would have typified some widespread notions of the grandly simple, or the simply grand, the nobleman of nature, or the native nobleness of mind—so forth, so on, and all the rest. The eye a keener, lighter blue, the same type might be met with among Scandinavian mariners: worthy, honest fellows; or liars and thieves; brave fellows in a storm or wreck; or cowards who, with their knives drawn, keep the women from the boats: either, as the case might turn out. The same type might be met with in the road-gangs of English 'navvies.' Resting on his pickaxe, in the sun, his adamantine face a model of virile majesty; his broad, armoured chest browned by exposure, his knotted arms tattooed and tanned, the type might answer fairly to the notion of the Titan. Titanic he would be in his mere silence; Titanic as he lay down at the roadside, by a heap of stones, and carved his coarse bread and bacon; Titanic in the village alehouse, where he would crush the pewter pot between two fingers of one hand, or fell the humane persons who refused to serve him with more drink; a bashful and a faithful Titan in his homely sentiment and affections, or—Titanic when he lifts his hand, unclosed, and a child falls bleeding to the ground; Titanic in his simple sorrow by the bedside of a dying wife; Titanic also, doubtless, when—shod ponderously— . . . ?

In the navvy's garments, Hugh Ormond-Weir would have looked the navvy to the life. It was the same type: an exterior of grand simplicity, or of simple grandeur—which shall it be, young ladies? The same type has been idealized and gilded in eclectic pictures from the gold-fields. There be those that have construed simple grandeurs, grand simplicities, from idyllic gold-fields, to mean primordialities which, elsewhere, receive much precious time and space from the assize court and the gaol. Who tell us of those gold-field idylls? Who that knows human nature? Who tells us of the primitive this-that-or-the-other noble attribute! What are the stereotypes? 'Rough sense of justice' —'respect for bad women,' etc.—no doubt: the first being sown amidst the most savage of communities, by nothing nobler than self-interest; the second not at all implying respect for the women who are good. Respect for bad women; and disrespect for the good ones: given those

primitive nobilities, *voyons*, need the point be argued? But in long boots and a grimy shirt, a belt with a big buckle, and a slouching hat, Hugh Ormond-Weir might have sat for his portrait, anywhere, as quite the right hero for the untrue idyll out amongst miners in the gold-fields. Thus, oft and full many a time, had Mr. George Herbert mused. There would have been about the man, under all circumstances, all conditions, a certain physical splendour—the splendour which, in either sex, eclipses. If a sot, this man whom Mr. Herbert detested cordially would have seemed, even to Mr. Herbert, to redeem filthy sottishness. If a servant, he might have been tempted into elopements, invited into *mésalliances*—for the high-born dames. We peruse accounts of episodes like these; we peruse them in the daily press. Seldom are we able to compare the types. When we do get our opportunities of comparison—the cases have happened in our own town, in our own suburb, our own parish, our own square, or terrace—how alike the types are, on both sides! One may almost classify them, by rule, arriving at a scientific exactitude. Now, from the social atmosphere of his whole life, Hugh Ormond-Weir, the specimen we are examining cursorily, had, when he chose, just the acquired suppleness, arrogance, and polish which have 'fascinated' many most superior ladies who pay never any heed to mere externals—certainly not, of course not! Long ago he had learnt his power; and his power he was just the man to use.

How often had Mr. Herbert been the spectator of these monotonies! How often had he noted the challenges by ladies who were always challenging because they had nothing else to do; ladies who hoisted themselves upon fancied eminences, and thence threw gages of combat down to men like Ormond-Weir! Their motive would be pique, resentment; the tactics would be simulated disdain; they soon fled the combat, or succumbed. They derived a curious pleasure from those iterations that Hugh Ormond-Weir was 'fascinating.' It was not so very curious, though, their gratification in the recital; because the assurances implied their own excuse. They remarked to Ormond-Weir himself, as to one another, that he was 'fascinating;' and they told other men, too, that he was 'fascinating;' wishing to vex those other men, or to unsettle them, or to stimulate their ardour.

Ormond-Weir's mission in society had been defined to be one of making attractive women false and unhappy, and of rendering honest men unhappy and dishonoured—the species of dishonour being particularized by utter dependence upon another person's variable humour. The author of the definition was an author of stage-plays. He had espoused a brilliant and successful actress, for whom he had conceived and built up the very *rôles* that had raised her from obscurity. Overwork broke down his frame. It was to expect too much of his brilliant and successful wife that she should care thenceforward very greatly for her home with him, an invalid. Nor had he expected so much from her. The event proved that he had expected just as much as was quite ordinary, and that his estimate of character had nowhere been at fault.

Few of the men disliking Ormond-Weir were courageous enough to acknowledge that the cause of their dislike was often fear and envy. It would be fear, perhaps, because of idle words pronounced by lips they loved. It would be envy, as well as fear, because there had been someone who had spoken idly—someone very dear to them. High-minded men and women all disliked him. But none of these diverse dislikes affected Ormond-Weir. He was his own law to himself.

'A pity that the woman doesn't live who could give this man a lesson,' meditated Mr. Herbert. 'Heaps of them have thought they could, and every one of them has failed. I'd like to look on at the lesson. I'd like to see him martyrized, as women can martyrize the men who do esteem them.'

Was there a dignity and manliness consisting of self-discipline and resignation, self-control? Perhaps. If so it wasn't highly rated, as a rule. If so, it was not the dignity and the manliness of, as a rule, the ladies' hero. The Ormond-Weir type, now, if he could hear the 'No' that blasts a life, if he could see across his path a man who was preferred—what sort of manliness would he exhibit, this 'like-a-great-simple-good-humoured-boy-you-know'? What? Why, Mr. Herbert, the spectacle has been witnessed. There are child-like wonder, child-like rage: blubberings, and menaces, and kicks: the man who opposes 'shall be taught'—if practicable: the lady shall be first implored to humour this

great blubbering boy—the ladies' hero, baulked of his desire —and then she shall be brutally intimidated. There shall be kickings for the dogs, too; and floggings for the horses; and blows there shall be for the man-servants, who are to be discharged upon the spot if they retaliate. 'My husband is a very powerful man,' said the lady, so deliciously, in the law-court, 'and all the tenants can testify to his brutality, especially when I quitted him.' And it was to Hugh Ormond-Weir that she referred, when adding still more deliciously, 'He would not have permitted my husband to reproach me; he is nearly six feet in his stockings, and a very powerful man; and he would have thrown my husband out of the window—and richly he would have deserved it, for doubting me.'

'I cannot say how deeply, how profoundly, I regret that I was not earlier in possession of a clue to Garth's whereabouts,' said Mr. Herbert. 'A few hours only: a few hours might have saved his life.'

'He's best where he is,' answered Hugh Ormond-Weir. 'The parsons tell us so, at any rate.'

'If you had had any such information as that which I have been seeking for so anxiously, it ought to have been communicated to me.'

'I dare say. That was an omission of my wife's.' Mr. Herbert did not reply; and the husband of the Fashionable Beauty resumed: 'I found the address in this Rue de Caen the other day, on an old letter to my wife—a letter dating back some months. She knew.'

'Mrs. Ormond-Weir must have forgotten it,' returned Mr. Herbert hastily; 'she must have mislaid the letter.'

The other gazed at him with a tantalizing and rather contemptuous expression. 'As I found it—she must have mislaid it—eh, Mr. Herbert? The former sweethearts of married ladies oughtn't to write to them imprudently, ought they, Mr. Herbert? How does a circumstance of that sort strike your legal mind, now—that circumstance coupled with mysterious absences by the married lady?'

'That's too vague for an opinion.'

'I'd make a case out.'

'Send it to London, then, please.'

'Ah—ha! No! The letter wasn't interesting enough—and there are so many, from so many more.'

'*As-tu fini de rêver à tes créanciers, romanesque!*' The voice, with its conventional accent of raillery, came from within the card-room.

'*Qui rêve, se perd,*' answered Ormond-Weir.

'*Tiens, c'est un mot!*' exclaimed another voice, without the foreign intonation of the first—'*mais tu n'as pas trouvé ça tout seul!*'

'*Non, c'est avec une amie,*' said Ormond-Weir.

'*Tu veux dire plusieurs amies!*'

'*Pauvres victimes,*' resumed the first speaker, imitating a popular comedian—'"*Pauvres victimes!*" *Victimes du rêve!*'

'*Rêve qui peut,*' solemnly pronounced a fresh speaker. 'I play ze queen of spades.'

Uncle Carteret and his guest had completed their tour of the garden, and were now approaching.

'The loss of twelve hours was evidently due to no neglect on my part,' murmured Mr. Herbert, scrutinizing the other narrowly; 'but I declare that, for an instant, I felt as if I merited responsibility for his murder.'

'I dare say,' returned Ormond-Weir. 'But it's, as we say in England, "Suicide whilst in a state of unsound mind:" religious mania. And——opportune, too!'

'You learnt the circumstances——'

'I learnt the circumstances this afternoon, on driving up the Rue de Caen. The English detective whom you left there told me you had just gone away.'

He told you of the whole circumstances?'

'Whole circumstances? I suppose he did. Ordinary suicide, he told me. Of course I explained who I was, and why I had called.'

'Of course,' acquiesced Mr. Herbert mechanically. When had this man arrived in Paris?

'The detective rode back with me. Religious mania, he said:——opportune religious mania for me, I told him.'

They were joined by Uncle Carteret, who strove to retain Hugh Ormond-Weir as his guest. A lawyer and his client; two lawyers and two laymen; that, said he, would make the *partie carrée*. Ormond-Weir had not until that moment identified Mr. Carteret Gibbs with Mr. Herbert's host, Rue Beaujon. He excused himself to Uncle Carteret by alleging a previous invitation.

'We're on opposite sides of the Champs-Elysées, then, are we not?' he remarked to Mr. Herbert, adding in a low tone as they separated—'and I shall hear from you about this —— business as soon as these —— papers have been looked through?'

A fascinating man was the other's mental comment—ha, indeed!—what fascinations!

'He's a dev'lish handsome fellow, that, do you know, I say, George,' observed Uncle Carteret. 'What's his infernal name, again?'

'Hugh Cholmondeley Urquhart Ormond-Weir.'

'Ormond-Weir? Any relative of the Mrs. Ormond-Weir —the fashionable beauty?'

It was Mr. Shelley who asked the question.

'This fellow's the lady's husband,' said Carteret Gibbs; 'and I compliment the lady upon her discrimination. And that's what I like to see; and that's how it ought to be. By Gad, a splendid animal! Has he got any brains?'

'Oh yes, he's clever enough,' responded Mr. Herbert.

'Well, just fancy a fellow like that tied up for his life to a plain, homely, clumsy, or mean-looking woman! It would be wrong, it would be wrong—it oughtn't to *be*. Or, just fancy a lady who has merited the universal tribute to her personal beauty which has been bestowed, it seems, upon this Mrs. Ormond-Weir—just fancy her chained up for a lifetime to some ugly, homely, plain, deformed, or mean-looking man! It would be wrong; it would be a wrong to the æsthetic principle; a cruel wrong, by Gad!'

'My dear uncle!'

'There's something here, though, Mr. Gibbs, that *will* be listened to,' said Mr. Shelley, with a smile; and he tapped his breast upon the left side. 'And it often goes its own way independently of the æsthetic principle: now doesn't it?'

'The rarity of an educated artistic sentiment of fitness,' declared Uncle Carteret, 'is one of the most disastrous features of our vaunted civilization.'

They had taken their places in the principal dining-room; and for some time Uncle Carteret amused himself by pointing out for Mr. Herbert's edification the various celebrities of his club, varying the entertainment with tittle-tattle as to their works, their whims, their wit, and wisdom. Mr.

Shelley was quite well-informed upon the deeds of all these celebrities, and occasionally seemed to rate them much less highly than their rivals across the boulevard. It was oppressive, thought his fellow-guest—it was tyrannical—this one-subject talk. Perhaps it was the one-subject talk which had frightened away the eminent French architect. Mr. Shelley stood it with a seasoned callousness; but poor old Uncle Carteret—how he had changed!—why, the day was coming when he would be shunned and cited as a Bore.

Nothing in Ormond-Weir's words or manner just now had betrayed a knowledge of his wife's presence in Paris. He was doubtless ignorant of her departure from England. She, too, must be unaware of her husband's arrival here; otherwise, it would be necessary to believe her capable of a deceit that was revolting—a sustained deceit, a deceit more than revolting, because what would it not imply?

Well, at the best, the race for the first news of the Burroughes fortune seemed infamously sordid. And, by the way, Hugh Ormond-Weir, in visiting the Rue de Caen this afternoon, had acted not less imprudently than Evelyn herself had done. Toppin's prompt story of a suicide looked as if there had been some—some suspicion?

If Ormond-Weir had paid a previous visit to the Rue de Caen, a visit on the previous day, the previous evening——

There he sat—the guest, probably, of his friend from the Austrian Embassy. In the spacious room there were many tables, and hardly a table was unoccupied. There were not a few striking faces here, not a few 'fine heads:' broad faces and narrow, long faces and short, thin faces and fat, ruddy and pale, shaven and pilose; there were crowns that bristled like a brush, crowns from which the savage locks rushed down like resistless rivers, and crowns that were unfurnished. The French painter at the next table to Mr. Herbert's—he was from the Franche-Comté, said Mr. Gibbs—might have posed with credit for his own study of Antinöus; the Spaniard at their left hand—he was a painter, too, said Mr. Gibbs; a painter of Moorish scenes; and ladies went and deposited bouquets under his pictures at the Salon; his manners were entrancing; he could not possibly meet a lady without convincing her that she inspired him with a permanent and exclusive ardour and respect; and they all believed it, even those who had known him for years, and saw him seldom—

that Spaniard should have painted his own portrait in the costume of Ruy Blas. Here, too, this young fellow, a remarkably fine young fellow—something of the English look, but without the Englishman's elaborated reduction of his countenance to a blank, and with a few un-English incipient wrinkles:—this was a sculptor.

'Guest here to-night, I suppose,' observed Uncle Carteret; 'belongs to the other club over the way; wish he didn't; American'—and he added a name that was Irish—'one of the best of the young sculptors. Why don't you grow a few of 'em in England—a few young sculptors? It's a lost art in England, they tell me—sculpture. My cousin of Throgmorton Street wanted a marble bust of himself for the hall of his livery, in the City of London. Couldn't get one. Couldn't get a likeness and a work of art together. Why? How? Tell me! No native talent? Or too much cliqueism? No art in the country?'

'I've been staying in England for a week or two,' remarked Mr. Shelley—'and I never in my life heard so much talk about art, and I never saw so much art, either. Why, my dear Mr. Gibbs, they've got their art schools everywhere, now!'

'Well, why don't we see some of their art—hey?'

'Because we don't go where it is.'

'Hey? Oh, but——'

Mr. Herbert could easily command a view of the table at which sat Ormond-Weir. The latter emerged advantageously from every physical contrast to which Mr. Herbert half-unwittingly subjected him—contrasts with the divers personages by whom he was surrounded. He had the look of a travelled gentleman who at some time or another has been a champion in some branch of athletics; he had the cosmopolitan ease of a travelled gentleman whose *compagnons de voyage* might usually have been royalty incognito. Whilst Mr. Shelley and Uncle Carteret were debating art, Mr. Herbert weakly allowed his mind to revert to questions which he had resolved to banish for at least that hour. It seemed to him that as he once more—as he for the hundredth, or, perhaps, the thousandth time—inquisitively, angrily, reluctantly scanned the features of the man who had from their first meeting filled him with antipathy—it seemed to him that he had never so plainly as at this

moment detected the sort of repressed brutality, the despotic self-indulgence upon which one day, before he knew that Ormond-Weir was his successful rival, Garth himself had impulsively commented.

How should a human life weigh in the balance against self-interest, with a man like this?

It would not have been indispensable—if he had wished to compass the death of the one individual who stood between him and the half-million, and more, of the Burroughes estate—that Hugh Ormond-Weir should have personally figured in the foul play planned and carried out. Agencies were not wanting for the perpetration of such deeds. What had it signified, the visit of this afternoon? An attempt to create evidence for future use? Had he not simply gone to the Rue Caïn in the character of the innocent inquirer, with the object of professing amazement and great grief, in the presence of credible witnesses, at their announcement to him of Allan Garth's death?

'If he has professed great grief at the news of Garth's death,' concluded Mr. Herbert suddenly—'we hold the murderer.'

'We hold the murderer,' he went on, 'that is to say, we hold the principal—the man who may have incited to the murder. What am I saying? No! It is almost dastardly to be thus calmly summing up the hypothesis upon no facts, whilst the man whom I can suspect to be guilty is here, almost a fellow-guest with me, almost face to face with me, almost depending upon my efforts in his interest! How dastardly, especially when I know—yes, when I know that—it was base enough, the other thought!—but this!—when I know—that—I—am—saying to myself—

'No—I will not say it—I will not wish it!—It would be dastardly, indeed!—I will not think that!

'What if this man's hands are stained with blood? I need not know it! What if I knew that this man were the actual murderer, should I be in the least bound to divulge my knowledge? And who shall force the knowledge of his guilt upon me! I will not know it—I will not see facts—I will not hear evidence. And then what remains to me? My own belief may be the morbid outcome of my own mind—the outcome of an intense antipathy; ah, yes, I may believe him guilty because I merely wish to believe him

guilty; and I may wish that, in my own despite, against my better feelings—I may wish to believe him guilty because —oh, must it be so!—because I love her.'

Uncle Carteret and Mr. Shelley had arrived at a deadlock; and their silence broke up Mr. Herbert's cogitation for a time.

A discussion ensued upon vintages. Mr. Shelley then told some tales. Mr. Carteret Gibbs, who had sailed over many seas, told other tales. Mr. Herbert listened—listened, and laughed — listened, and applauded — listened, and mourned that void, his future—laughed, applauded, listened —and could have wept childishly the bitterest of all the bitter tears that can be shed by hopelessness.

'—— I love her! I love her——!'

Yes—imbecile! Infant! Self-deluded fool! Cheat yourself with fine phrases; cheat yourself with fine sentiments; cheat the woman whom you adore, and whom you met too late—and cheat yourself! You would serve her, would you not?—serve her to the last drop of your blood—die for her, would you not?—unselfishly, unrecognised, unthanked; and all the reward you ask for is the recollection that you once did render her some service: that is the reward which would repay you, would it? Yes—with just this added, the slight, solitary chance of telling her—of telling her that you ask but for that poor reward. Impostor! Hypocrite! Infant! Strive to delude her as you delude yourself? Fine words? Fine phrases? Think you that she knows not? She knows!

You love her—you?—the man who thanked the gods that you could remember—the man who studied her with challenge not less than with curiosity? And, pray, what was it you remembered when you said 'Thank heaven, I can never love her?' That she bore the name of someone else—but it was of a man less worthy than yourself, you added!

Will you remember this, too—that the man who was worthier infinitely than yourself was passed over by her—contemned—and slowly slain? And, if that man, far worthier than you, why not yourself?

Serve her? Enmesh yourself. Drift on. The reward you ask for, you define. Be satisfied with that reward. You wish but for the chance of rendering her service? Hypocrite! You are a man of honour, are you? Be other-

wise, if you choose, and if you please: it does not matter what you choose. Pray, what are you who love her, as you say—one out of three thousand?

The man she loves is your inferior. *D'accord!* But she loves him. You give up your life to her; but that you are quite free to do: your life is your own, to give or to withhold. She does not want your life, perhaps. Untaught simpleton!—Untaught! And what if, when her hand touched yours, you said to yourself, 'Oh, if we had not met too late——?' Her hand betrayed that she, perhaps, thought similarly? *Naïf!* One out of three, five—how many thousand! But, were it so—and let it be so—where can be your hope?

'I may have to consult you, in a day or two,' said Mr. Herbert to the occasional Paris agent of Gray, Longley, and Gray, 'on a question of French criminal procedure. Or, possibly you would not mind clearing up the point for me now?'

'Not at all,' answered Mr. Shelley. 'On what stage of their procedure?'

'I am curious to know whether, under their system of summary arrests, a foreigner can be kept in prison upon bare suspicion: whether the stigma of imprisonment might precede the examination of the *juge d'instruction*, although the ostensible accusation might be absolutely groundless?'

'Oh, certainly.'

'Then, supposing a warrant made out in advance, and supposing the commencement of an *instruction* which is immediately proved to be without valid basis, what would be the requisite formalities for procuring the prisoner's prompt release?'

'Is your prisoner a native or a foreigner?'

'Neither,' said Mr. Herbert, endeavouring to speak with unconcern. 'But I am not quite clear on the extent of their magisterial jurisdiction. Suppose the case of some foreigner, we will say—some foreign visitor—myself—anyone—the victim of appearances, or of a deliberately fabricated charge——'

Mr. Herbert paused, for he was brusquely overwhelmed by a new set of contingencies: Ormond-Weir, guilty of subornation to murder; informed later of his wife's presence in Paris, under an assumed name; then ascertaining her

imprudent visit with Madame Bertaux, to the Rue Caïn, on the evening before the crime, and then——! But could Fate deal in such injustices?

'Imprisoned wrongly for a few days, or for a week or two —yes?' inquired Mr. Shelley.

'Does the question of the release depend upon the discretion of the magistrate charged with the *instruction?*'

'No. The *juge d'instruction* sends his minutes of the case to the Public Prosecutor, and if he reported in favour of immediate release, the order could come back on the same day. It would most likely be what they call a *mise en liberté provisoire*—a species of "Not proven" order for discharge. But in the case of foreigners, there must also be an order from the Prefecture of Police.'

'The Prefecture might withhold their order?'

'Certainly.'

'And therefore control the question of the release?'

'If they see good ground against the release, the people at the Prefecture can hinder it, of course.'

And at the Prefecture—M. Renaud!

Uncle Carteret broke in with an '*Apropos*'—but, on exchanging glances with Mr. George Herbert, forbore to repeat the question which he had addressed to him on the young man's arrival at the club. Uncle Carteret adapted his *apropos* to a somewhat laboured anecdote in illustration of policial fallibility.

'Well, if any philosopher here present wants to put a new character into his private gallery of queer foreigners!' exclaimed a voice from the neighbouring table, 'I'll tell him where to go and find one; and, for a type, he *is* a type—this one's a devil of a type!' The speaker was a middle-aged anything, expressing himself in British. 'Has anybody ever been to a place in London called the Kensington Fold? No? Yes? Heard of it? Well, what do you think of a Kensington Fold Revivalist in full cry round by the Faubourg du Temple! Yes—an awful Revivalist! A species of educated long English ranter, with a great shock head of black hair, and black gloves, and black hymn-books, and dressed all in black. A fearful creature! And not mad at all. Mad? Not mad at all, that I could make out. Only too frightfully rational, I thought him. He's earnest, too. That man will do a vast amount of harm!'

'Haw—too bad! Tub-thumpers!—haw! Can't they leave us Paris?'

'When did you run against him, Courtenay?'

'Last week. Wanted to show this famous Rue Caïn to a fellow that's a second cousin of mine, a Prebendary in the Midlands. Never saw the street myself until last week. Read about it often enough, of course. S'pose I'm the only man here who hadn't seen the place. What? Well, I took him round by the Faubourg du Temple—and that's a place you don't know, either, some of you!—what? well, I don't say it is!—but, just as we were driving round a corner where there's a patch of waste ground and a bootshop, "God bless my soul," says my second cousin, "what an outrage upon all decency!" I looked about us on all sides to see what could have startled the Prebendary; and here was this fellow just then giving out a Revivalist sort of psalm in English. "An outrage upon all the decencies of international decorum," says the Prebendary. "Dear me, Marmaduke; dear me! Let us expostulate." And we pulled up.'

'Haw—good—haw!'

'Expostulate! The fellow tackled us in such a style that the Prebendary led the way back into the cab, full speed, and, by Jove! we made off for our lives. The crowd roared at us, shrieked at all three of us; as we drove off, the crowd cheered the Revivalist man ironically—they cried, "*Vive M. le Prédicateur!*"—and little boys ran after us, and shouted, and threw stones at the cab.'

'I have heard of the man he refers to,' murmured Mr. Shelley to his host and fellow-guest. 'That is the Englishman of the Rue Caïn.'

Uncle Carteret glanced again at Mr. Herbert, and quaffed his wine. '*L'Anglais de la Rue Caïn!*' said he; 'I read a paragraph about him in a small evening paper, now I recollect; but I thought it was a *canard*—an ill-natured hit at us.'

'How he tackled us? The fellow was unanswerable—that's how he tackled us. I said he was a ranter; but he didn't exactly rant. He talked so deuced quiet to the Prebendary, and he sent the shots home so fast, that the old gentleman got flustered, lost his temper, and looked ashamed of himself. He wanted to convert my second cousin to the

doctrines of the Kensington Fold. My second cousin, who's the best of men, but doesn't think much of the Fold, said afterwards that he felt as if he had committed all the sins of the Fold congregation. "That man's too good for the Kensington Fold," said he, "and he can't stay with them long. In England he'd found a sect." "I wish you'd take him back with you to found one," I said; "we don't want 'em over here, these fearful founders of English sects. The frightful creature is far too good for this metropolis," I said; "there'd be no living in Paris with so much goodness and black broadcloth." The cabman told us that he lived in the Rue Caïn, this Englishman; and as he was away from home, we resolved to go there, as originally intended. The creature's quite superior—that's the worst of it! Seymour, you're a Protectionist; can't you stop these importations at the Custom House?'

'Haw—wish I could—haw! Like to make them *casus belli*.'

'Like to have 'em out in Indiah—with the niggahs—aftah dinnah—tiffin—ah! Stick 'em up in rows—aftah dinnah—shy sodah-water bottles—ah—you've no ideah—Indiah'——

'I say, though, Temple—how's that for British rule—India—natives?'

'Don' know! Eri'sh rule? Don' know—ah. Niggahs don' mind. Give 'em money. Ex'cise. Climate. Livah. 'Bliged t' '——

'There must be some very fine types for study in that street, the Rue Caïn,' commented a new speaker. 'A model of mine, an Italian, once lived there. He posed for my Judas Iscariot of two years ago, and while I painted him he used to tell me about his neighbours. I lost him; and I think he's at the galleys.'

'We'll all go to the Rue Caïn in a body, some day,' continued the second cousin of the Prebendary—'and we'll call upon this educated fanatic, and we'll point out to him the unwisdom of his ways. We can't have a fellow like that raising Paris. Blot on the old country's name. We'll tell him to pack up and go. And if he won't go, we'll kidnap him; or we'll have him thrown out of the country, as a spy; or, by Jupiter! we'll hang him—we will!—we'll hang him!'

'Ha! ha! ha!—we'll hang him! We'll string him up under his own roof!'

You would not see facts—nor would you hear incriminating evidence—at the last resort it should be by you, perhaps, that evidence would be destroyed!

And this is how the woman whom you now know that you love—and why?—shall recompense you, Mr. Herbert! This is how she shall ennoble you, shall make you worthy of her, shall be worthy of your own ideals—the words are yours—when you yourself are at your best! Saying nothing to you, not one syllable—incurring not one atom of responsibility—she shall tempt you to commit wrong?

—— Perfectly. *Sans doute.* Then this is how your argument shall run: Our cool friend, yonder, the assassin, must be spared to her because she loves him; must be spared by you, because above all things you would seek to be the interpreter of the man who, whilst he lived, forgave: and because, you believe, the spirit of the dead has whispered, 'There shall be no vengeance.' A man has said, 'I wish to die. He who takes my life and saves me from the sinfulness of self-murder—that fellow-man is my welcomed benefactor, wished for so long, so patiently—and, at length, so welcome!' Were our cool friend, yonder, the denounced assassin, were he—the man abhorred—to yield up his own life for the life he took—she would be free, once more: true: but free, mourning him; incredulous for ever of his guilt; and evermore repaying with abhorrence of yourself the share you had in his punishment—'his murder.' But, avert from him that just penalty, if to avert it lie within your means; restore to the powers of evil their triumphing, unscathed agent; let this man live on, many years, the assassin of men's happinesses, women's honours—*and he will leave her.* —Wait. Count upon that. Be silent.—Ah—to this woman whom you now see that you have loved, for what noble thoughts you are indebted!

The basenesses! What have they been? There was the base thought which you shrank from, when in her presence. Was it not the thought, half-undefined, that, if her husband had abandoned her, and Garth had lived—your own friend, her first lover, Allan Garth, superior to yourself, would have been for you the rival, robbing you? Was it not the thought, half acknowledged, that if—if——assume the case—if that

could happen—the death of Garth had meant for you the removal of the one man before whom you were in honour bound—if ties of friendship can at all bind your honour—to efface yourself—the death of the one man, the despised man, who had dwarfed you?

Have you not nearly said, O Pharisee, 'As other men are, I am not'? Have you not nearly, nearly said, 'In this, the removal of the one form that might have stood across my path, and from me might have shut out happiness, I may be pardoned if I discover the hand of Providence'? And you were shocked that she, who has indeed swayed fates, should have discoursed openly of the Providential and of herself as if implying that favoured, intimate, exclusive relationship of the elect! A little more of this ennobling feminine influence which you may be described as having undergone rather than as having chosen—a little more of this ennoblement, and will you not be found excusing yourself for dwelling with complacency upon the disappearance—final, this time—of the murdered Garth? And the excuse which you will possibly be applying—may it not be the excuse of a 'gratitude incumbent upon all of us for interpositions,' upon our behalf, 'by Providence?'

'No'—Mr. Carteret Gibbs was replying to the group at the next table; 'they don't *all* think of dollars and themselves, themselves and dollars.'

'Well, never mind, then, let's hear Barrymore's anecdote.'

'Of course I can't hold forth to all these fellows, or to the first-comer, no matter whom, upon what private impressions I may have formed and cherished,' added Uncle Carteret seriously, to the two young men, his guests. 'An old man, speaking with enthusiasm on the subject of some personal impressions of this kind, exposes himself to misapprehension, pity, banter. But I know that the only young girl of this generation of yours, my boys, who has been able to recall to me someone of my generation, my own—when I was your age, George—was precisely an American girl. She differed from all others that I met. There was only one fault that I found with her. She did not exhibit that interest in the Carterets of Cliffshire, and in our ancestor who took part in the Third Crusade, which I am bound to admit I observed elsewhere. Did I not mention a Miss Lyndon to you, George? Yes, I fancied so.

What are these fellows talking about? The idea that *she* gave you was—gift!—yes, gift, and glorious gift!' Uncle Carteret paused, in the midst of his souvenirs, to rally himself for a digression into sentiment. 'Infinite gift,' then said he, deliberately.

And if Uncle Carteret's reminiscences had been prompted by the character of one other, mused Mr. Herbert,—one other, his countrywoman, the Fashionable Beauty, if you please, Evelyn Ormond-Weir—in what a different vein would he have spoken! If Evelyn had been worthier herself, surely she could not have suggested to him, ever, thoughts that were unworthy, thoughts that were new to him, and were repugnant.

'A member—is he?'

Mr. Shelley appeared to be referring to one of the three or four individuals who were just then lounging by the louped curtains through which a glimpse could be obtained of the dining-room beyond. During an interchange of salutations by his companions, one of these individuals stood back by himself, half hidden by the curtain. Very like, reflected Mr. Herbert, noticing the solitary figure—very like, indeed; but not the man.

'Not a member,' replied their host; 'but I've seen him here once or twice, I think. A friend of Negradska's. That's Negradska—the fellow in the riding boots. Why the devil a fellow should walk about at night in riding boots and spurs——'

Not the man. Something of the same attitude—the same figure—but not the man. Negradska was a prince, Uncle Carteret had stated: but by the side of his friend, that other personage, he had the bearing to-night of a courier engaged to escort his Sovereign: that other personage of slender build, and haughty carriage—the complexion ruddy, the features regular, the hair quite short, and jet-black; the eyes——

'A tremendous character, I can tell you—that man by the curtain,' said Carteret Gibbs to Mr. Herbert: 'that's Renaud—the great Renaud.'

—— the eyes half-closed, but at this instant regarding fixedly in the direction of Hugh Ormond-Weir; the latter unconscious of their scrutiny.

'Renaud!' echoed Mr. Herbert.

Mr. Shelley glanced at his neighbour as if struck by the tone in which he had pronounced the redoubted name.

'An extraordinary man, of that there can be no question,' concurred Mr. Shelley.

'I cannot explain half the contradictory things I hear about that man in confidence,' said Mr. Carteret Gibbs. 'Wonder where they can be going, he and Negradska! Ah, Negradska knows that client fellow of yours, George. Negradska knows all sorts of people who are in front; but there's always something shady about them, in some way or another. It's his one ambition, now, to know people, and to have it said of him that he knows people. And he loves to play the introducer. A nice little party they'll make this evening, somewhere: Renaud, your client, Negradska, and those others. Renaud's magnificent, to-night! Ah—he's here to make the acquaintance of your client.'

CHAPTER XV.

THE strains of the 'Fantaisie-Impromptu,' executed by a master, were distinctly audible, through open windows, to the pedestrians who passed along the quiet Quai des Orfèvres, on this fine morning in early May. A short thickset man, whose bushy grayish curls and powdered chin had evidently received quite recent attentions from the hairdresser, and whose ill-fitting garb might have been that of a gay young mechanic abroad on Sunday, loitered nervously in front of a watchmaker's premises beneath the open windows, looked up at the open windows, moved to similar premises beyond, looked up again, returned, again moved away; a policeman paused upon his beat to watch the half-restrained gesticulation of this elderly or middle-aged mechanic attired in the grotesquely ill-suited clothes; and an idler in a dingy blouse alternately regarded, from his place upon the stone parapet of the embankment, the barges which were being unloaded in the tiny arm of the Seine below, and the policeman pausing upon his beat. The *Allegro agitato* rang out with a crisp velocity from apartments on the interminable second floor of No. ——.

The master was M. Renaud. He was seated before his piano, alone, in one of his own salons.

It was well known downstairs, by the concierge of the house, that the Protean tenant of the endless second-floor suite, overlooking the embankment and the Seine, was no less a personage than Simplice Jean Louis Renaud. With the same fact, the neighbours were perhaps equally well acquainted. But in the obligatory returns of persons tenanting the house nowhere appeared the patronymic of Renaud. Callers upon M. Renaud would usually inquire for him under other names; common, uncommon; patrician, plebeian; native and foreign; a great number of names, and the concierge downstairs held a complete list of them. And in one of the offices attached to the Police Prefecture, hard by, the concierge himself had become a familiar figure.

M. Renaud undoubtedly did look, this morning, as he rested for an instant at the piano, like a fatigued, somewhat mature, distinguished *jeune premier*, from, say, the State-subventioned 'house of Beaumarchais.' His hair, this morning, as on the previous evening at the club, was thick and black, but it was cropped so closely that it resembled a symmetrical smudge of ink upon a denuded crown. The ruddy complexion had all gone; it had been removed, no doubt, at the same time as the effect of those ten or twelve touches of the make-up brush, which, by an artist, can transform. He wore a loose dark-blue velvet jacket, with facings in black braid; the collar visible underneath the jacket was in white silk; the tightly-fitting slippers were embroidered in silk also—a monogram in black, on a dark-blue ground. On the middle finger of each hand he wore a plain gold ring, set with a dull stone, jagged and ugly. The bright morning rays from the window fell directly upon the straight scar noticed by Mr. Herbert, at one side of the neck; and in this full light the scar glistened vividly. The wound might have been inflicted with some curved instrument—a sickle rather than a scimitar; or the long, slanted, guillotine blade might have slid down to the *lunette*, thence—what has not yet been witnessed—to slide upward again, sparing the head.

He bent over the keyboard, struck a few chords thoughtfully, repeated the chords, varied them, dashed into a brilliant *point d'orgue*, repeated the first chords, and wandered off into the pianist's improvisation.

The door opened softly, and an ogre's head peered into

the room. The ogre glanced at the windows, at the expiring fire, then at the pianist, and lingered.

'*Tu m'ennuies*,' said M. Renaud, without turning his head.

The ogre's head was withdrawn, and the door closed softly again.

M. Renaud was improvising, and it was not bad: an improvisation composed more or less, no doubt, like a good many others of connected souvenirs.

From the opposite embankment of the river came the sounds of a jolting-cart, horses struggling for a foothold on the steep stone-paved ascent, men calling to one another, and urging their horses on to the main thoroughfare. The rumble of a prison-van driven briskly towards the depôt, in that vast block of buildings, to the left, hard by, mounted from the roadway of the Quai des Orfèvres.

M. Renaud moved listlessly to the window thrown open wide. His eye rested upon the idler, yawning as he lolled upon the broad stone parapet. M. Renaud touched the button of an electric bell.

The door opened softly, and the ogre's head reappeared.

'Have Athille told that he is clumsy,' said M. Renaud, with gentleness; 'I can see that he is observing someone.'

The head advanced, and part of a huge body made a timid entrance into the room.

'Monsieur will take cold,' proceeded in grating accents from the ogre.

'*Tu m'ennuies*,' replied M. Renaud placidly.

The body and the head disappeared. M. Renaud quitted the window, and lounged to the high chimney-piece. He gazed at the dying embers of the miniature fire; inhaled the fragrance of fresh violets on the mantelpiece—violets that sparkled as if happy that the dew still clung to them; and studied his own features in the immense mirror. M. Renaud tossed his head almost imperceptibly, and almost smiled. It should have been at once a compassionate and a sardonic smile, had the two wrinkles deepened.

Upon an *étagère* stood a couple of japanned trays filled with cards. The names which lay uppermost were, on the one hand, those of a Baron H——, who had scribbled along the slip of pasteboard, '*Tout est retrouvé, fors l'honneur*;' Inspector Byde, of the Criminal Investigation Department,

Scotland Yard; and a M. Héliogabale Saint-Maurys, who had written '*Suis dans un fameux pétrin. Viens souper, je t'en supplie.*' On the other hand, the two or three names visible were those of Mlle. Du Brantôme, of the Society of Femmes Savantes; Mlle. Zéro, of the Opera-Tragique (*de la part du Duc* * * *); and—these cards attached: a great lady and her *protégée*, doubtless — the Baronne d'Angine and Miss Higgs.

The door reopened softly. The huge body reappeared. M. Renaud was gazing at the portrait of a lady—an oil-painting, hung in a bad light on the wall. A dozen photographs, some loose, some framed, were carelessly distributed among the ornaments of the chimney-piece. One of the photographs represented the original of the oil-painting.

'Monsieur can attend?'

'What is it?'

'Achille, Monsieur——'

'Well?'

'He will be more careful.'

'Yes——'

'And I was to say that he is observing Benoît from the Rue Caïn.'

'Benoît—Benoît—*bien.*'

'That Benoît has been loitering in the neighbourhood for the past hour. That the demeanour of Benoît has appeared to Achille to be abnormal. That Benoît might be desirous, possibly, of making a communication to monsieur.'

'Send Benoît to me.'

An enormous hairy hand still grasped the door. The small round eyes—pale-gray and green they looked—which shone in the ogre's great head, shifted from M. Renaud to the open windows, and from the windows back to the dead embers of the fire.

'*Ah, tu m'ennuies!*' said M. Renaud placidly.

'But, monsieur—the fire out; and the days are not yet warm, warm. The days can still be treacherous. Monsieur can take cold.'

'*Mon ami, tu m'ennuies,*' responded M. Renaud, with gentleness.

The pianist returned to the 'Fantaisie-Impromptu.' When again interrupted he was dallying with what appeared to be a favourite passage with him—a passage written *Largo*

for two bars, and then 'quickening into *Moderato Cantabile.*' The ogre came softly inside the room, and closed the door.

'Well?' demanded M. Renaud.

'I caused Benoîr to be spoken with. But there is something abnormal in the demeanour of Benoît. He did not answer; and he has gone away.'

'*Bien*, Antoine.'

'And he has gone away.'

'He will come back, Antoine; and, then, you will bring him to me.'

Antoine hesitated.

'The wrist—?' inquired Antoine. 'The wrist—this morning?'

'*Tu m'ennuies.*'

'I hit monsieur twice yesterday,' persisted the other. 'Last week I frequently hit monsieur.'

'You improve, Antoine.'

'No; monsieur retrogrades.'

M. Renaud played the *largo* through again, and then indolently quitted the piano.

'Well—a pass or two!' said he.

In the fencing-room to which access was gained through an inner doorway concealed by curtains, Antoine certainly exhibited in rather a less degree the possible aspect of the domesticated gorilla, and in rather a greater degree the aspect of some Corporal Ajax from the mountains of Auvergne. When the affrighted eye could rest upon him, and could examine him attentively, it was impossible to avoid being struck by his air of affectionate submissiveness towards M. Renaud. As for main details in his appearance, the colour of his skin was rusty iron; his eyebrows were twin thickets; he wore no beard except a Saracenic five days' growth; his moustache burst forth in all directions, ending in a savage twist of bristles near the ears; and these, his elephantine ears, hirsute, lost themselves in the entanglement of apparently half-charred gorse. The forehead was low; the jaw tremendous. The arms were phenomenally long and loosely-jointed; and not less phenomenal seemed the almost uniform length of the hair-covered fingers, whose hue was that of ingrained walnut-stain. Before attaching the plastron he struck his breast mechanically with his clenched hands, and emitted a sort of growling cough.

'Ah!!!' exclaimed M. Renaud, in a tone of reprimand.

'Pardon—pardon, monsieur.'

'When will you rid yourself of all those execrable habits, Antoine! They suggest the sugar-cane jungle, and mid-Africa, I tell you.'

'Madame la Comtesse encourages me, monsieur. Madame la Comtesse laughs, and calls me *Njena*.'

'Ah, my poor Antoine!—*En garde!*'

The foils crossed. The moment the foils crossed, the languor which had characterized the bearing of Simplice Renaud gave place to a collected, nervous, threatening mobility that really would have justified the citation of a well-worn parallel—the figure of the striped member of the *feræ*, palpitating as he crouches for a spring.

'Half a louis if you hit me this morning,' muttered M. Renaud. 'A louis if you keep me off!'

His position was less graceful doubtless than the tiger's crouching for the spring, and the style contrasted oddly with the academical correctness of the mighty Antoine, ex-instructor 'at the regiment.' The foils clung together, separated, struck, writhed as if changed into rods that changed themselves to serpents, and then—two flashes. M. Renaud had lunged, was parried, had lunged again, was parried again, and Antoine had attempted no return. The foils met, tapped, clung together once more, and Antoine thrust at the forearm, was parried, stopped the swift return, thrust at the heart, was parried, and then, for, as it appeared, less than an instant, just straightened out his right arm—perfidiously, though without effect—the anticipated *botte* from the other side failing to ensue. Suddenly, M. Renaud's foil whizzed in a circle round the other, parried a dazzling assault, and touched Antoine sharply in the breast.

'This time—I think?' said M. Renaud.

'*En plein*,' admitted Antoine.

'But it's surer when preceded by the second feint.'

'Yes, that disguises it.'

Antoine prepared to resume. At that moment, however, a telephone signal resounded from the vestibule. Antoine hastened from the room. M. Renaud paced the floor listlessly again, the mask in one hand, the foil in the other.

'A lady,' announced Antoine presently. 'She would at first give no name to be reported to monsieur. She now

gives her name, in confidence, absolutely, and trusts that it may be clearly within the recollection of monsieur. The events of which her name will probably remind monsieur, she believes, are not of recent date. The name of Ruaz.'

'Ah!'

'The address of monsieur, together with a *consigne*, has been delivered to her at the Prefecture, where she has applied this morning, she says, in urgency.'

'Very well. This will do——'

It was Madame Bertaux who then entered, ushered in by Antoine. The latter had removed his plastron. He took his seat, stolidly, on a divan near the door—a one-headed Cerberus, Njéna. The visitor appeared to be at some pains to manifest her displeasure at the unceremonious nature of her reception. M. Renaud waited, lightly bending the foil with his left hand.

'You remember the name I bear, monsieur?' at length demanded Madame Bertaux. 'We meet for the first time; but the name of Manuelo Ruaz you remember!'

'Perfectly.'

'So much the better. You remember, therefore,' she went on harshly, 'that you owe some reparation to the wife of Manuelo Ruaz.'

'Explain yourself, madame—explain yourself!'

'Why, monsieur—you need no explanation—you!'

'*Au fait, madame!*'

'You remember, do you not, the murder of my husband?'

'Ah—perfectly. The murder of your husband. Perfectly!'

'And for that, I say, you owe me reparation.'

'Reparation: perfectly: and so?'

'Those events are not of recent date. When they occurred I was quite powerless, of course, to avert from my poor husband the fate to which he was condemned. But I believed, monsieur, that you would have procured his liberation afterwards; because the charge against him was false. The galleys killed him.'

'There can be little doubt of that, madame—the galleys, and phthisis.'

'I say as I have always said—he was murdered! And who was his murderer, if not you, M. Renaud?'

'And the reparation, madame?'

Madame Bertaux hesitated, and glanced in the direction of the door.

'In what I have to ask,' said she, 'there are at stake the vital interests of innocent persons to whom I am so deeply indebted that to serve them, I would sacrifice myself. My errand here is solemnly, sacredly confidential, M. Renaud.'

'No ceremonies, I pray, madame! I observe none, myself—and I seek for no confidences, either sacred or profane. Speak, if you wish to speak; but I cannot give you many minutes.'

'Am I to speak in the presence of——'

'—— Antoine? Yes, I am afraid so. Antoine attends at all the gravely important interviews here. Not all visitors here are received, madame; not all the visitors who are received are, as in your own case, madame, received at once. My time is precious. And as you see——' A gesture indicated the fencing-plastron and the foil. 'The reparation?'

'It is—' Madame Bertaux hesitated again; but in a lower voice, and with a gesture which, consciously or unconsciously, was dramatic enough—'to spare my benefactress!'

'Madame?'

'To spare my benefactress.—Who?—I know your power, M. Renaud. I know of it from—no matter whom! And I ask, as the reparation due, that you shall spare this lady, the daughter of my benefactress, and herself a benefactress. Who? An English lady, *de passage* here—the name will not be strange to you—the name of Conyers.'

'Ah!'

'You have learnt that she committed an imprudence; but it was I who counselled her, and I who accompanied her.'

'Madame Ruaz counselled her: that is to say, Madame Bertaux counselled her: that is to say, this English lady whose evening visit to the Rue de Caen coincides with a murder, acted upon the counsel of the widow of Manuelo Ruaz!' There was no response. M. Renaud continued: 'An indiscretion on your part, madame! Such an indiscretion that I should feel no small astonishment, I confess, if you could abstain from just one more—that of inquiring how M. Renaud could have ascertained the name under which he addressed his private message to you, late last evening—

a laconic message, was it not?—the name of Bertaux. But I did not ask you to call here, madame. I bade you exact obedience: at the penalty of prompt exposure.'

'Yes, you can bring ruin upon her,' answered Madame Bertaux bitterly—'and ruin utterly undeserved, for there is no guilt.'

'What is the name of this English lady?'

'As you know,' answered Madame Bertaux resolutely—'Conyers.'

M. Renaud took a turn up and down the room, whipping the air idly with his foil.

'And if she should unjustly be made to suffer,' went on his visitor, 'the blow will have been dealt at her, my benefactress, by me!'

'Perfectly.'

'Why, you would not—you could not—punish as deliberate guilt what you would know to have been but imprudence! You could not throw suspicion upon innocent persons—overwhelm them with such shame?' She paused, and added: 'At least, I warn you—I warn you, M. Renaud—not to strive to do so!'

It was perhaps intentionally exaggerated—the courtly forbearance of this fatigued exquisite who, for the first time, allowed his mild eyes, with their full beam of contained intelligence, to rest upon the masculine features of the dame confronting him. She met his gaze with a curious eagerness.

'Men such as Renaud—Renaud, of the Prefecture'—he resumed, averting his own gaze (what had he noticed that amused him?)—'such as we, Madame Ruaz, are often the unconscious instruments of retributions. We know not that we are serving occult purposes, but we act; we act; we punish. Fate employs us, madame, to chastise culpable imprudences as well as deliberate guilt. And we pay the penalties, also, of our own imprudences. I put no questions to you, Madame Ruaz. You say that you yourself have been the cause of a rash impulse by your benefactress. This visit to myself this morning may prove but one more rash and foolish impulse.'

'It was for the best,' repeated Madame Bertaux incoherently—'I have but acted for the best!'

'Personally, madame, you would have been unknown to me. You announce yourself in a name which, so far as

events of the moment are concerned, tells me nothing. On behalf of a benefactress, you make an appeal to me; you base your appeal upon a claim, a right. Your benefactress is the lady whom you have just named. And then I can suspect, and not till then, that you are no other than the Madame Bertaux to whom I addressed the private message at a late hour last evening! It is very simple. You see? And you have but acted for the best!'

Madame Bertaux rose to her feet, trembling.

'And I now know, therefore, that, with the benefactress whose interests are so dear to her, the widow of Ruaz, Manuelo Ruaz, passes under a false name.'

'Not false, monsieur!'

'How then?'

'I bear the name of my own family—a family of unsullied honour.'

M. Renaud moved to the door, and muttered a direction to the janitor. Until Antoine's return the interview remained suspended.

'But how was it possible,' he then resumed, 'that this miraculous M. Renaud should have ascertained the name, even, of the English lady's French companion—ah, ha? Upon the hotel-book appears the name of Madame Conyers, but those of the persons by whom she is accompanied do not appear. M. Renaud, communicating specially with the French companion, addresses her by the name she gives—Bertaux. How? No miracle, madame; the routine of the *métier:* a routine which I only mention to you now, and insist upon, because I wish you to avoid an error, a temptation, a possible impulse. We want you in Paris, for the present, madame; do you imagine that you can disobey. My message to yourself sufficiently enlightened you, I think? You were to see that there was no such thing as hasty flight. Otherwise—prompt exposure!'

'But you have a certain reputation—an honoured repute, monsieur,' began Madame Bertaux in a low tone—'for willingly averting scandalous exposures in the classes that are now——'

'*Apropos*, Antoine,' called M. Renaud—'give the orders—with reference to visits.' Antoine opened the door a little way, and spoke briefly to some person immediately outside. The door closed again, M. Renaud continued: 'In that

message to yourself, Madame Bertaux, I said nothing as to the visit of two ladies to the Rue de Caen; I do not now ask you whether the name inscribed upon the hotel books be the true name of the English lady; I did not suggest, even remotely, that this call of yours should be made upon myself. I had no wish to meet with you, madame; why have you come? To claim some reparation! Allow me to pay some tribute to your motive; but—reparation for the sentence of the law upon the villainous Manuelo Ruaz, who, at the galleys, died a natural death, as though he were an honest man instead of——!'

'He was guiltless!' declared Madame Bertaux vehemently. 'And you, who procured his condemnation—you are his assassin.'

'An old, old burden, madame; a delusion, but a delusion to be dealt with gently. I was the officer of the law. The law continually assassinates murderers. Learn this from me—in confidence if you like: Ruaz was a murderer as well as what you know. If I had done my duty, I should have delivered him over to the English police. Do you remember a case termed at the time, "The Harley Street Mystery?" That was the murder of a lady and her child. The crime has remained a mystery, indeed! On both sides of the Channel it was for some time *une affaire à sensation;* and you remember why. Your husband was the murderer, madame.'

'Manuelo!' exclaimed Andréa Bertaux, in a failing voice.

'Manuelo Ruaz.'

'These are infamies, monsieur—fabrications!'

'At the epoch of that crime I myself was living in London, and—I *knew* Manuelo Ruaz!' Leaning lightly upon the foil, grasped in his right hand, Simplice Renaud now levelled his regard fixedly at the small dimmed eyes in front of him. 'The case has long ceased to be spoken of,' he resumed softly—'and *I* shall not move in it. I knew Ruaz at that epoch, yes; but it was not until afterwards, here—when Simplice—Jean—Louis—Renaud had effected his *début*—when the sentence to *travaux forces* had been passed upon the cosmopolitan adventurer Ruaz, that I knew our worthy Manuelo to have been married; that I knew that his wife, a Frenchwoman—an honest woman and a good mother—had quitted him, long previously; that,

elaborately deceiving him as to her whereabouts, she had for years, with devotion, managed to convey to him, spared from her own earnings, an income, small, but never failing, sufficient to preserve Manuelo Ruaz from future need, and to rescue him—had he been reclaimable—from crime.'

'I had loved him,' murmured Andréa Bertaux; 'he was my husband.'

'You came to ask for a reparation which you fancied was your due. But you would not have ventured upon this desperate measure if you had not believed that within a few hours I must be in possession of incriminating testimony!'

'I know of your influence—and your powers,' replied Madame Bertaux. They regarded each other steadily. 'There is nothing that we need hide,' she continued.

M. Renaud advanced a step. He had deposited the foil upon a low couch.

'Do you think you can answer a few questions?' said he.

'Ask!' replied Madame Bertaux.

'Do you feel that you must answer to my questions?' said M. Renaud.

'Ask!' was the response.

'Close your eyes,' commanded M. Renaud.

The masculine visage confronting him appeared to acquire an unnatural rigidity. As M. Renaud gently raised his right hand, the dark saffron eyelids, wrinkled and tremulous, descended.

'You visited the Rue de Caen, on the evening before last?'

'Yes.'

'Your visit was to the residence of an Englishman—passing under the name of Allen, his real name being Garth—an Englishman with whose previous history you were well acquainted? Can you see these three questions distinctly, and answer them?'

'Yes, all that is true.'

M. Renaud extended his right hand and touched one of the closed eyelids, pushing it slightly upward, and rapidly examining the eyeball.

'You were not alone?' he demanded, stepping back.

'I was accompanying an English lady, whose family have been my true benefactors.'

'The object of the visit?'

'To apprise our friend of an inheritance.'

'Your own part of the interview—what was that?'

'On behalf of the English lady, my benefactress, I persuaded our friend to relinquish a portion of his inheritance—a large inheritance.'

'In whose favour—to relinquish it?'

'In her favour.'

'Why? Upon what title?'

The answer appeared to be made with difficulty.

'He had been her suitor in the past: an unsuccessful suitor.'

'And you prevailed upon him to relinquish a considerable portion of his inheritance in her favour—the greater portion?'

'He was already rich!'

'That is not an answer. You are arguing with me: that is a justification, not an answer.'

'Yes.'

'What do you mean to say—"Yes:" what does that mean?'

'The greater portion of his inheritance.'

'And, that promise obtained, you took leave of him?'

'Yes; but——'

'But?'

'There was a condition attached to the pledge which we received from him.'

'Yes? A condition that——?'

'The condition that'——the speaker again hesitated in her monotonous delivery—'the condition of an elopement: that she should quit her husband, and elope with him, our friend.'

'She is unhappy, with her husband?'

'She is unhappy—and her husband seeks to part from her. We were to go from Paris to-day.'

'You promised?'

'We promised. He was to join us elsewhere. We were to leave this morning: to-night, at latest.'

And what shall hinder you?'

'We are hindered by a menace. A menace by M. Renaud.'

'Good. And do you know that your friend is dead?'

'We now know. It has been a great shock to us, and a great surprise.'

'When you quitted him, what did you observe that could have prepared you for the intelligence of his death?'

'There was nothing that could have prepared us for that intelligence—yesterday.'

'You suspect no one?'

'No one.'

'Who will benefit by his death?'

'I do not know.'

'And if M. Renaud should find himself enabled to release you at once from this obligation to remain in Paris?'

'In that case,' came the reply promptly—'my benefactress would be for ever grateful to M. Renaud.'

'And the name — the true name — of this English lady?'

'This English lady, my benefactress, is Madame Conyers.'

M. Renaud advanced again, and blew sharply upon the closed eyes and the moist temple.

'Madame Ruaz!' said he—'Madame Bertaux!'

The visitor opened and closed her eyes repeatedly, as if dazed by a sudden return to consciousness.

'Where am I?' she exclaimed. 'Oh—I remember!—How strange!—What has happened?—Will you not grant the just reparation which I ask of you, monsieur?—We are expected to return to England. The name I bear may not be known to you, monsieur——'

'*Allons, allons*, madame!' interrupted M. Renaud mildly.

'It seems to me that I have dreamt!' The speaker passed her hand wildly over her forehead. 'Have I not been dreaming?'

'Collect your thoughts, madame.—Antoine!'

'Monsieur?'

'If this lady should call again within the next few days, be careful to bear in mind that I am not at home.'

Madame Bertaux's countenance assumed a dusky hue—the blush of her complexion. With impressive dignity, she demanded a word of explanation. These extraordinary orders?

'I assure you, madame,' was the response, with a faint accent of deprecating entreaty; 'I assure you that my time is valuable.'

'But I do not comprehend——'

'I have no time for little comedies, madame. I cannot play little comedies, madame. No—I beg of you—no, no, madame! Your motives have been admirable, no doubt: oh, I am sincere!—for your motives, I render you homage, madame, but——*voyons*, madame—to attend upon me, here, for the purpose of attempting little comedies! I pray you not to return.'

'You are not a Frenchman, then,' said Madame Bertaux, 'for you insult a woman!'

'*Allons, allons*,' repeated M. Renaud soothingly.

'You are not *un galant homme!*'

M. Renaud came forward again in the most courtly manner and ventured to clasp her outstretched fingers.

'Permit me,' said he, leading her ceremoniously towards the door.

'I will never cross the threshold of this house again! No honest woman should cross the threshold of your house, monsieur! This is no place for any honest woman!'

Madame Bertaux's majestic indignation was really a successful effort. As M. Renaud responded with a low bow, in which there was a little weariness but no mockery, she continued, in a changed tone and manner:

'Yes, I seem now to remember! I seemed to have been dreaming, and my dream comes back to me. You looked at me—you made me speak! I wished to remain silent, but you made me speak. Ah, monsieur, what is this influence—what is this power you wield? Whatever it be, this irresistible, strange influence—oh, use it never otherwise than as a man of honour!'

There was a moral elevation in the strain of this appeal which affected the Njéna visibly.

'Madame, you were patiently indulged,' murmured M. Renaud, abandoning her hand; 'be satisfied. You came here with a lesson to repeat. I listened—you want to escape from Paris. *Allons*, madame, no little comedies! You are not'—and here the wrinkle deepened at the corners of the mouth—'you are not a good subject, madame, not at all—not a good subject this morning.'

He bowed once more, and began placidly to unfasten the plastron.

'One word—one word! Tell me'—and the set masculine

features suddenly lost their harsh rigidity—'the supposed murder—the mandate from M. Renaud—are we?'

'You are free to act as you may choose, madame; and you will accept the consequences of your determination—whether wise or foolish.—*Antoine, reconduis madame!*'

M. Renaud passed into the adjoining apartment.

The windows had been closed. Throwing them wide open again, he stationed himself in a position from which it was easy to observe the movements of the idler in the dingy blouse, half reclining upon the broad stone parapet, lower down the Quai. Presently the man rose, negligently tumbled from the parapet to the footpath, stretched himself, and walked away, quickening his pace.

Half an hour later, as Detective Toppin and Mr. Herbert were being escorted through the vestibule of the labyrinthine suite of rooms upon the second-floor of No. ——, a vocalization met their ears at which Mr. Toppin, who was perspicacity itself, turned towards his companion, opened his eyes so widely that they ceased to be nice eyes to look at, although they were of the beautifullest brown, and then sombrely knitted those fine silky eyebrows. For the benefit of a confidant more appreciative—the inner Mr. Toppin, that is to say—he added the signal which on one occasion already related he had despatched at the United States—a wink, a large wink, the largest of winks that are 'cute.

And the vocalization was so very simple!—

'La, la, la—lĭē-ty
La, la, la—lĭē-ty,
La, la, la lĭē—ĭē—ĭĕ—ty—ah!'

'If it's the Rue Caïn inquiry, sir,' whispered Mr. Toppin, 'it's a-nearing of its climax.'

'It had better be so,' returned his companion impatiently; 'for I am not at all disposed to remain for very long dependent on the good pleasure of your M. Renaud, or of anyone else.'

'Oh, I say, sir!' expostulated Mr. Toppin. 'Recollect we're not at home!—I don't know whether he's aware of it,' he went on, 'but that's a mannuerism with M. Renaud. When he's got an arduous and a difficult inquiry, sir, and when he's on a clue, like, or when he perceives that his inquiry is a-nearing of its climax—at least, I've heard so;

one of their men told me so; and he had heard it from a colleague—that's the mannuerism of M. Renaud: the Tyrolienne—*Laïtou, là-i-ou, làïtou!*' and Mr. Toppin warbled an echo, pianissimo; but the echo broke.

Antoine preceded the two visitors into the salon where M. Simplice Renaud had been seated at the piano. At the same instant M. Renaud entered from a bureau or smaller salon, of which the entrance faced the curtained doorway of the fencing-room.

Antoine trudged doggedly to the spacious hearth, and doggedly struck a match.

'No!' interposed M. Renaud. 'You assassinate me.'

'The windows!' said Antoine humbly. 'These gentlemen?—Well,—but—the health of monsieur!'

'*Tu m'ennuies!*'

Antoine meekly lumbered towards the door. A mastodon paw resting upon the heavy, antique handle, he wavered and looked round, a dumb appeal to the relentless one, to relent.

'*Ah, mon pauvre garçon,*' sighed M. Renaud, his eyelids drooping—'*Si tu savais comme tu m'anéantis!*' The door closed upon Antoine.

Scanning the details of this physiognomy, Mr. Herbert reflected that on the present occasion, at any rate, he was face to face with the real M. Renaud. It was the countenance which he had likened to a plaster-cast, surmounted by a wig; but the wig had been put off and the plaster had a different shade. Nor, indeed, was this altogether the same physiognomy. He could not have sworn to it. The features had been modified—emphasized—how was it? Bizarry, this! There was expression, character, in this face. Could the continuation of the line, here, the line, there—a curve—could 'stippling,' by an artist, do so much!

'My firm are anxious to hear from me,' began Mr. Herbert. 'Do you empower me to make any definite communication to-day?'

'The clients whom you are representing,' answered M. Renaud—who are they?'

'I should be glad to report speedily to my firm, as to the results of the official search amongst the papers left by the deceased.'

M. Renaud bowed slightly.

'Our interview may terminate at once, I think,' said he, rising.

'As you think—certainly,' answered Mr. Herbert, rising also.

'Gentlemen!' urged Detective Topping—'Gentlemen!—What? Because we don't quite understand each other?'

'I shall be pleased, however, to receive you,' added M. Renaud, with no indication of either haste or annoyance—'if you like to return.'

He moved away.

'Sir—can't we out with the facts about the clients?' whispered Detective Toppin. 'It looks suspicious holding matters back. And the client that came up yesterday afternoon, when you had left, gave his name in a minute, Mr. Weir did.'

'What I am here to ask,' returned Mr. Herbert curtly—'is whether they have yet discovered, amongst the papers, anything in the nature of a will. You undertook to have this ascertained for me, without postponements. Otherwise we should have made our application in the regular way, through our agent, Rue Boissy d'Anglas. They detain the effects, on the assumption that a crime has been committed. How do we know that they are examining the documents at all—or that the documents are safe?'

'Ah, but your agent, sir, would have to prove your *locus standi:* and think of the delay—whereas, quietly, like this, man to man, like, you know, sir, between colleagues—and where there's a crime——'

'Crime? Suppose we see some evidence before we talk of a crime!'

Ah—ruminated Mr. Toppin—we shall see the evidence fast enough when the right moment comes, and then perhaps we shall wish that we hadn't asked for it!

'You know, sir,' he added aloud—'when you're looking after more than one, sir—when it's two or three, and perhaps four—you've got to be quiet, like, you've got to go nice and steady, till you're sure of all of 'em—and then's the moment, sir—then, sir, is the moment, *'Cré nom,* and not till then! —M. Renaud will bear me out, I'm sure. We've got to forget our evidence, so to speak; we've got to keep the principals from being frightened; we've got to say that crimes are suicides!'

'Right, Mr. Toppin.' The speaker advanced indolently from the window. 'And, in this case, we have more than one person to secure.'

'Then'—rejoined Mr. Herbert—'you are satisfied beyond all doubt that——'

'That the deceased was murdered—yes, beyond all doubt.' M. Renaud lounged to the mantelpiece, and from beneath a letter-weight took up a scrap of paper on which, apparently, some memoranda had been noted. 'If you would like to learn for yourself what the surgeons expect to prove from the post-mortem examination, a card from me will procure you admittance to the gentleman in charge at the Morgue dissecting-room. At about this time, indeed, you might still find my friend the Professor, who has furnished me with these corroborative facts this morning. In a few minutes you would be at the Morgue.'

'My mission can only relate now to the question of the deceased's intestacy,' said Mr. Herbert. 'There may be a will amongst the papers—a will properly drawn up and attested—or if there be no discoverable will, we may find some indication of the existence of a will, lodged in some place of safety, elsewhere—at a banker's premises, for instance.'

'The search through the documents will demand more time than in the ordinary affairs of this kind,' explained M. Renaud; 'the services of a translator have been needed.'

'Shall we continue to look to you?'

Mr. Herbert had been conscious of a vague embarrassment—a rebellion, an hostility—he knew not what. It was the struggle to subdue the embarrassment which led him into this impatience, this irritation, he felt; but at the same time it was this irritation which betrayed his embarrassment. His mind had of course reverted to the brief scene of yesterday—to the interrogation of Benoît—to the close of that interrogation.

'Much preferable, sir,' interposed Toppin. 'The difference between a day and a week.'

'The search through the whole of the documents will demand some time yet,' repeated M. Renaud. 'As a matter of fair dealing, Mr. Herbert—you can avert nothing; what you tell me I may know already; you cannot influence any detail in the course of this inquiry; but, as a trifle proving

what we may call, as we are speaking English, straightforwardness—suppose you specified here, at once, the names of all the personages for whom you are professionally interested?'

'There can be no objection to that, of course,' answered Mr. Herbert, reddening.

'We have, consequently,' pursued their host, placid to the point of somnolence—'the visitor to the Rue de Caen, late yesterday afternoon—Mr. Hugh Ormond-Weir?'

'Yes.'

'Mrs. Conyers?'

Their glances met.

'I am acting for no client of that name,' said Mr. Herbert, humiliated by the dilemma.

'I regret that the portrait recovered from Benoît could not be shown to your client, Mr. Weir. It had just gone out of my custody. You see, Mr. Herbert, I am quite frank with you. And you make me talk. My agent who followed you from the Rue de Caen to the Rue de Rivoli; who observed you join three ladies; who approached you closely enough to be able to identify on any future occasion either of those three ladies; who ascertained at the hotel bureau the particulars which it was his duty to ascertain; and who returned immediately to me, at the Rue de Caen, to report; that agent identified Madame Conyers with the original of the portrait recovered from Benoît. He had quitted the premises of the deceased just prior to the arrival of your client, Mr. Weir. With the portrait in his custody he had quitted these premises, at No. 13, Rue de Caen—on his way to the Gare du Nord, for the night-mail to London. He arrived in London this morning. His errand?'

Simplicity itself, the errand, commented Mr. Toppin silently. He had just now been yielding to despondency, because of his pledge to 'keep the lady's name out,' unless the lady should appear to be incriminated. It was all very fine to pledge yourself to keep out ladies' names, all very fine to be set up in a private inquiry office on your own account; but what if, when everything had been said and done, it should look like a clear case of guilt against the lady—who by that time had been able to destroy proofs. *'Cré nom!* What if it were the chance, the chance—the love affair, with poisoning! And what if T. T. missed it—

that great occasion, that sensational chance. ['Effete England and Ephemeral Europe—London's Latest Love-Lorn Lunatic—the High-Toned Belle, and the High-Strung Beau—Detective Toppin—received our Emissary with a Hearty Grasp of the Hand—His Grip is Iron—Detective Toppin longs to visit Wigwam City, Penn.—He respects the 'Cable,' and is Not a Dunder-headed Britisher—His views upon America's Future—(By Hurricane to the 'Cable')]—oh, what if, after all, there was a case of guilt against this Mrs. Ormond-Weir, mixed up with 'ighnesses! The prime mover in a conspiracy to poison!

'My agent reached London this morning,' continued their host. 'It will be his business this morning to call at the address of the photographers, to produce that portrait, and to ascertain the names of the original—Mrs. Conyers, no doubt. I shall receive his telegram.'

This had an auspicious look for Mr. Toppin. But then he always baffled our conjectures, our Renaud did. Was it not the maxim of that Ineffable, the Chevalier, that from the consequences of no matter what culpability, every pretty woman must be shielded? There might be plain and homely women, ugly women or deformed, who might have been victims of the cruellest wrong, the vilest, the worst oppression; these were the women for whom true knights should break a lance: and you might have imagined that the Bayards could be counted upon to take their cause up with no less enthusiasm than the cause of any female, either princess or Pariah, who should happen to be well-graced by nature—well-favoured—'fascinating,' as they sometimes wrote and said, 'though goodness knows,' thought Mr. Toppin, 'what they mean, and I'm sure *I* don't! I know what a jolly girl is, like that Mrs. Clay-Trevellian, who smoked my pipe, and read me all those private notes from all those city gentlemen, and said there was not one half so handsome and so jolly as me!—and I know what good girls are, whether they're good-looking or whether they're plain! —yes, and I know what ladies are!—but as for——'

'We have sometimes gone so far as to allow the wrong persons to be suspected—even imprisoned,' added M. Renaud. 'What other clients of yours are directly interested?' He touched one of the small ivory buttons with which the walls were sparsely studded.

Mr. Herbert hesitated, really at a loss for a reply. For the few and distant relatives of Allen Ridgeway Garth, the firm of Gray, Longley, and Gray were not the legal advisers.

Antoine entered from the inner salon.

'One other, is there not?' asked M. Renaud; 'Maud Effingham Farrar?'

Maud! How had the young girl's personality been brought within the cognizance of Renaud? And was she, too, to be dragged into a case of sensational disclosures! If it were possible to purchase absolute silence with respect to these two names, the names of the two sisters, every farthing of his private fortune should be placed at the disposal of the man Renaud. Would it not be a feasible undertaking—to mislead Renaud, and to hurry the two sisters away, that evening? He answered Renaud's question in the affirmative.

'By arresting innocent persons, we retain the real culprits in their usual haunts; because if not suspected, what the real culprits have to avoid is suspicion. Or—we bring them out of hiding-places; or—we bring them back to us. Who suffer? The innocent, for a time; but we restore to them their honour, we clear their characters, as you say—eventually? Who benefit—eventually? The community: by the conviction of the guilty; and, with the rest of the community, the innocent benefit—eventually.'

The spectacle of M. Renaud upon the threshold of a blunder tickled Mr. Toppin's fancy to the extent that he was scarcely able to repress the rumbling Ha! ha! of his rich young voice. He could have roared, he could. And we know what Duke Theseus would have commanded, could his grace have caught the rolling echoes of that perfect roar. Renaud was tacking on to the portrait some other lady's name! And who might Maud Something-or-Other Farrar be? wondered Mr. Toppin. The name had been found among the papers, he supposed; perhaps there were letters with that signature; Renaud expected that the name to be telegraphed to him from London would be that name! If he, Toppin, had been free to speak! He would have suggested to his eminent colleague an immediate stroll along the arcades of the Rue de Rivoli; an inspection of the photographers' shop-windows; a more particular study of the ladies who remove portions of their raiment with the object of being photographed—the ladies who were kissing

doves, or were caressing, or controlling big, big, such big, big dogs—the ladies who were ogling archly out of swings, or who were on a piece of rock reclining with defiant calm—the rock a rugged rock: and then, perusal of the names. There'd be names from every country where the vices and the vanities of civilization not only flourished, but were flattered. Among the English names, there'd be—a faded name, Verona Dudlay; a misspelt, neglected name, Mrs. Clay-Trevellian; a printed name, Lady Jezebelle Poyns; and a name that would have been freshly written upon fresh white cardboard, 'The Very Latest—The Last New,' Mrs. Ormond-Weir. Renaud would have recognised the original of their portrait as he, Detective Toppin, after having seen the portrait, had recognised the name. But, before the afternoon, the message would have been wired through to Renaud, from London. Why, however, this great stress upon the question of that identity? A real, good, solid case of guilt! And the party a Professional Beauty? No hush-up, then, Chevalier Simplice! T. T. would be honest; he'd perform his duty to the public, to society at large; he'd be firm. The old colonel should say of T. T.—he should say in Wigwam City, Penn.—'I have the honour and the privilege of acquaintance, sir—yes, *sir;* there's not many Englishmen that *I* can do with, you bet, but Toppin's a man I'd like to see in Wigwam City!'

They had lighted the cigarettes, which, after a meek and lowly glance towards his master, the huge Antoine had placed before them, and, to Mr. Herbert, M. Renaud pronounced a few final words.

'Do not quit Paris yourself. Assure these ladies that my suggestions are———not to be disregarded. Be good enough, as their legal adviser, to attend at their residence in the course of to-morrow, to meet me, at an hour which I shall fix by message to you. Antoine—*accompagne ces messieurs, et reviens.*'

'To-morrow—Sunday?' demanded Mr. Herbert.

'To-morrow—Sunday.'

'The search through the papers will have been completed?'

'I shall apprise you of the contents of the will—*Messieurs—je vous salue*———'

'There is a will?'

'There is a will. *A demain, messieurs!*'

CHAPTER XVI.

THE wiser course would evidently be to counsel acquiescence in the behests of M. Renaud. In arriving at this conclusion, Mr. Herbert had concerned himself with the problems before him only as they appeared to affect the situation of Evelyn Ormond-Weir and of that other client of the firm whose existence he had momentarily forgotten, Miss Farrar. Dictation was unpalatable, no doubt; but the penalties of disobedience to the dictation of a man in the position of Renaud, backed up by legality, might amount to absolute disaster. Mrs. Ormond-Weir valued above everything the maintenance of her social celebrity. By all means. Let it be so. But there must be some sacrifice of the self-will, then, some abdication of the supreme personal convenience. The logical forces of an incriminating situation were not to be cajoled or frowned away. Men innumerable might in the past have been and would again be swayed by Evelyn's imperial frown, by Evelyn's 'unnerving smile.' Not all men, however, were to be frowned into moral cowardice, or to be smiled into an obliviousness of rectitude; just and good men were not thus pliable. It might be that M. Renaud was neither just nor good. But perhaps the place which women filled with us—we gave to them a shrine, sometimes: a shrine, when they permitted it—had been usurped in his case by a passion stronger still: the ruling passion of an enthusiast, a devotee: his passion for a cause, a vocation—criminal-hunting: the mine, the counter-mine: his duty.

Last night, at the club, after the departure of Renaud and his two or three companions—amongst them Prince Negradska—Uncle Carteret had brought the conversation to the subject of Renaud's repute for hushing-up unpleasant occurrences among members of the wealthier classes of society. 'The populace say that of him, freely,' had remarked a neighbour, 'and yet no man is more popular than he with the lower orders in the large towns. They look upon him, perhaps, as a future enemy of the "privileged classes;" they look upon him as the repository of facts which are most damaging against those classes; perhaps they hope to win him over; perhaps they think that he may come out some day with a political programme. Everything

is possible in a Republic torn by party.' Someone else had said that the heaviest prices were exacted by Renaud for hushing up these cases which began with so much promise for the debased appetite; that the cases for which the heaviest prices were obtainable were those in which the good name and fame of ladies with great titles or great riches were at stake—or ladies who were greatly beautiful, and great in nothing else, except perhaps in effrontery, or in the catalogues of their great and rich and titled friends; and that the sum total of the prices, or the revenue therefrom, defrayed the expenses of a secret system of police, the private police of M. Renaud.

Mr. Herbert presented himself at the hotel in the Rue de Rivoli early in the afternoon. By this time, thought he, her name has been telegraphed from London to Renaud.

He was ushered into the apartment in which he had left Evelyn and Madame Bertaux on the previous day. He was received by Miss Maud; and this young lady had no sooner welcomed him in a very frank voice and with the very prettiest of smiles, than she turned her back upon the visitor, and then turned her back upon the window. Mr. Herbert should have noticed that Miss Maud blushed rosily; but Mr. Herbert—'as the saying is'—had no eyes.

Her sister entered a few moments later.

'I was wondering whether you would come to see us this afternoon,' said she, with a precipitation for which, of all the greetings possible, Mr. Herbert was prepared the least. 'It is good of you to call. We are waiting for Andréa. We shall drive to the Bois. Will you not accompany us?'

They were attired for the drive. Mrs. Ormond-Weir at Home! Mrs. Ormond-Weir as Juno! Mrs. Ormond-Weir as Rosalind! At the close of her performance of Galatea, the Balaclava Charge will be recited by Mrs. Ormond-Weir! The new shape in low-necked dresses (as specially designed for Mrs. Ormond-Weir)!—all this faded out of Mr. Herbert's memory, and he almost stammered as he replied. The woman he loved stood before him—bewitching, and embarrassed.

'Can I say just two words, though,' added Mr. Herbert—'about the estate?'

'The estate? Business? Oh, let us banish it for to-day!'

'What I wanted to say,' persisted their visitor, 'referred to your own plans of the moment——'

'Whether we stay?—Shall we stay, Maud?'

'What did you promise, this morning?' answered the young lady—'at least, I mean, what did you tell me this morning?'

'I wish Andréa would return,' exclaimed her sister.

'If Hugh were in London it would be different,' continued Miss Maud. 'But as you know very well that he has gone to the Riviera——'

'What do you advise, Mr. Herbert?'

Evelyn gazed at him for an instant, and then averted her face smiling.

'It would be highly desirable,'—began Mr. Herbert—'highly desirable'—really this was most disconcerting——

'That we return?' interrupted Miss Maud. 'Oh, Mr. Herbert! And what is all this disagreeable London business? Can't the estate wait for us, in London? The estate won't fly away!'

'That we remain?' said her sister.

'I think so,' answered Mr. Herbert gravely.

'That we remain for a day or two?' asked her sister.

'For a day or two—I should think,' acquiesced Mr. Herbert.

'Oh, then the business is in Paris?' exclaimed Miss Maud. 'Eve—you did not tell me!'

'No, dear. It's only business.'

The woman of the world? The Fashionable Beauty? Her glance was honest and impulsive: her smile not artificial, if coquettish; this was again the handsome Evelyn Farrar; Hugh Ormond-Weir had not yet crossed her path. Ah, was it so?'

No; for in those days when Garth, already despairing, had not yet the fatal reason for despair which came so suddenly—in those days when he, George Herbert, had passed on, the chance acquaintance—Evelyn Farrar had been the imperious girl before whom life and its best promise opens brilliantly; the raven-haired, impassioned, but majestic virgin whose few words of thanks were grudged even to messieurs the distinguished painters of the Academy portraits, and whose silence was disdain; the confident, ungentle maiden whom the hard lessons of a

cruel life had not yet schooled; the unthinking and imperious girl who had not yet learnt that unhappiness, adversity, the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, anguish in the heart, doubt in the mind, the noblest, the most honourable self-respect humiliated—that these were experiences not reserved exclusively for other women, and for men. But, at this moment, was she not adorable!

'I wish Andréa would return,' repeated Mrs. Ormond-Weir, clasping a book which her sister held, and moving with the fair-haired Maud, thus, towards the balcony. The movement had been almost awkward, almost self-conscious. To Mr. Herbert the irrational fancy occurred that she was now for the first time living through her girlhood.

If this change in her demeanour had surprised him, that which surprised him still more was the steadiness with which he was now facing his own destiny. His own life, too, was to be broken by her—his, amongst the other lives; so, the issue had been decreed by Fate. It was no fault of hers; she was very far, perhaps, from thinking that he loved her; she perhaps took him for an enemy because of his harsh words. It was no fault of his own; because he had, first of all, avoided her, and he had, then, armed himself with all the theoretical abhorrence which a frigid ingratitude, a callous levity, a selfish and mean *exploitation* of poor Garth, and finally deliberate deception, if not falsehood, could inspire. By his own surrender to her, now, he judged of her surrender for that other, her husband; except that her devotion must be of vaster worth than his, because it could constrain her easily to the committal of unworthy acts from which he himself would certainly recoil, acts of which she, likewise, would have been incapable but for the man whose name she bore. He could endure now with a greater calm the exquisite ordeal of her mere presence. She was not free.

He knew what Fate willed. The rest of his life to be a void. Evelyn would win her husband back: how could she fail? As for the notion that her husband had been guilty of the murder of their dead friend—that was an imagining which, this afternoon, in the broad daylight, seemed to him utterly preposterous.

There was a will by the heir to the Burroughes estate, sworn under £650,000. To-morrow they would learn its

purport. That will, if unassailable, would end his own connection with the business of the Garth inquiry. The Ormond-Weir and Farrar families continuing to be the clients of Gray, Longley, and Gray, 'the only thing for me to do,' decided Mr. Herbert, 'is to sever my connection with the firm. No; I feel I must not meet with her. I could not bear it. Everything that recalls her I must endeavour to forget. If necessary, we'll go upon our travels. I'll ask Uncle Carteret to go half round the world with me. Anywhere, out of civilization.' Uncle Carteret would want to take him to America. He had been speaking again about the acquaintance which he wished to make for Mr. Herbert; the Miss Lyndon; the Denise Lyndon who had so powerfully impressed him—who must indeed have impressed him strangely to recall the idol of his own early days, 'my poor dead father's idol, too,' thought Mr. Herbert, with the most melancholy of all desolate pangs. But he would wish not to go where there would be communities. All civilizations were mere replicas of the thwarted high aim, the disappointed hope, the cross-purpose, the cross-purpose. Uncle Carteret meant very well for that young lady; and he meant very well for the young gentleman to whom he had spoken of the young lady. But elderly folks were much given to this disposing of their juniors. 'And I,' Mr. Herbert wound up, with a dogged adhesion to his hopelessness—'I shall have known and loved an incomparable Eve; and my life must be a void henceforth.'

'We weave our histories with the threads of fate.' The sentences had lingered in his mind. 'The pattern of our lives we know not. We are workers unconscious of our work.' The sentences were from an English story, recently perused. The author of that story, 'Threads of Fate,' had written of the stupendous loom which wove our destinies. The fibres of the 'tinted texture here or there' were invisible. 'Unknowing we take them in our hand,' he wrote; 'unconscious we coil the web: we see not the design.' The threads of fate! . . . And so it came about that Allan Garth was murdered. By whom? That was the question for the police. But who to benefit by Garth's death? Hugh Ormond-Weir? Would fortune favour him once more? Mr. Herbert concluded that most unlike her-

self would Fortune be if she withheld this further favour from the man who rated lightly all that she had hitherto bestowed. When Ormond-Weir should learn, as Mr. Herbert was now anticipating, that to Evelyn herself the dead man had bequeathed all—the whole of his possessions, the whole of his interests—his coarse, contented thanklessness would say, 'It's an ill-wind that blows nobody good;' and these words, under the circumstances, would be flippant words from an unscrupulous profligate, a shameless parasite.

The elder sister, re-entering from the balcony, paused on the threshold of the high open window, and half turned, replying to a question by Miss Maud. A moment more and she was within the room. But into Mr. Herbert's memory that picture had been flashed, to be indelible. In after-years he was to see her often in this picture he preferred. The pink and white awning shading the mild sun; visible in part only from its place near the window's angle, to her right, the exotic shrub towering with its load of a crimson convolvulus; herself, sable-haired, white-browed, her mouth infantine, her smile unnerving, her lips the crimson of the exotic flower, her eyes the bright and pure stars of the dawn. A woman's form; and a girlish pose, unaffected; often, in after-years, he was to see her thus. In her right hand she clasped the ribbons of the frail hat she had removed; the May breeze stirred her black hair; she laughed to Mr. Herbert, for no reason; and she swung the frail hat.

The English maid traversed the apartment. She was the bearer of a small package which, as she passed through, she continued to tear open. The contents it was easy to distinguish. They were chemist's newly-sealed and labelled phials.

Mr. Herbert announced the visit for the following day—the visit of M. Renaud.

'To-morrow—Sunday?'

'Yes; to-morrow.'

'If I had known my husband's exact address we might have telegraphed to him to attend at the interview. Would there be time for him to come up from the Riviera?'

Mr. Herbert could not really say, without a consultation of the time-table. But the presence of Mr. Ormond-Weir would not be indispensable. It was clear, added Mr. Herbert mentally, that she was far from suspecting her

husband's much nearer proximity than the Riviera. This fact he could no longer doubt.

'Poor Mr. Garth!' said she, in a lower tone.

The voices of the children at play in the Tuileries Gardens opposite; the monotonous note of the wooden clapper struck by the itinerant vendor on the garden-terrace; the jingling of harness-bells in the street below; these sounds reached them indistinctly through the open windows as yesterday at the descent of dusk: and both were to remember them in months to come.

'Poor Allan!' said Mrs. Ormond-Weir—'Poor Allan!'

Heaven save *me* from this commiseration, was her listener's silent comment. Heaven save *me* from pity which arrives too late! 'Pity's near akin to'—low esteem, and Heaven protect *me* from it!—especially when unaccompanied by self-reproach. 'Pity's good enough for the one or two fellows whom we meet like Garth.'

'You don't say anything, Mr. Herbert!'

'What can I say? He is dead; and we must go into mourning.'

'Oh,' she exclaimed, recoiling, 'you are brutal!'

'I know that I shall never meet another loyal fellow as he was,' answered Mr. Herbert.

'That is cruel—I mean that it *would* be cruel,' said she, directing at him the sudden glance which, yesterday, he had noticed twice—'but it is too childish.'

Pity's near akin to—love for somebody else, thought Mr. Herbert grimly. 'And she loves her husband sublimely, which is but right and proper, and is her duty, and is a noble spectacle, and a fine example, and an example that really needs to be encouraged. Let her effect the re-conquest of her husband, then. How can she effect the re-conquest? The fascinating Ormond-Weir, that universal favourite—with her own sex; the "dashing, cool, devil-may-care," and picturesque Hugh Ormond-Weir, the beau-ideal of the hero for most women, not an exclusive possession; the hero who is as much of a humbug for the members of his own sex as the conventional heroine may be a humbug for true heroines; how shall she win him back? By purchase. I hope,' he went on, 'I do most deeply hope that Garth may have made her his own universal legatee. For one thing, it would be characteristic of him. And then I'll get the firm to show

her how to profit by the Married Women's Property Acts, without for a moment appearing to dole out. As for me—I travel.'

She swept impatiently by taciturn Mr. Herbert.

'I feel stronger now I know what Fate has willed,' he assured himself cheerfully; 'I am in love with her; and we must part.'

'Do you know, sir'—the smile had reappeared; but it was a natural and a charming smile; no fixed loftiness of any photograph—'you frightened me so terribly last evening! and I really had been out of health. But to-day—yes, I *will* say it—to-day, sir, you are quite dull.'

'Yes; and I am very much afraid that I am dull by nature.'

'Well, no, you are not dull. You are a dreadful, dreadful—shall I spell it?'

'Yes.'

She spelt the word in a whisper, 'B-e-a-r!'

Mr. Herbert, who laughed gently, too, reflected that in this humour they sported with everything which we held serious. He had been wrong to speak candidly last night. She had been thinking of him in his absence, that he could perceive; and this was the consequence—flirtation! She could flirt with him!—and at a moment when a body at the Morgue lay on the dissecting-table under the surgeon's knife.

The English maid recrossed the apartment. She had retained one of the smaller phials, labelled in black letters on a red ground, 'Poison.' She hesitated, and gazed towards her mistress, as if awaiting an instruction. Her mistress answered with a careless gesture, and the gesture conveyed 'No.' The servant lingered.

'No,' repeated her mistress, with impatience. 'And the carriage must be ready at once. We shall not wait for Madame Bertaux.'

A phrase of excuse, and the visitor had asked the question.

Yes; the treatment ordered by the physician yesterday, was the reply. A powerful remedy. It had immediately restored her.

Was it a treatment to be abruptly discontinued?

No. On the contrary. But that did not matter. To-day she felt quite well again.

'But,' urged Mr. Herbert, pale and alarmed—'the risk of the sudden discontinuance!'

'Oh, it does not matter.' She smiled again, faintly, but turned from him. 'It does not matter.'

'Think of others.' He followed her. 'Think of your sister!'

'Maud? Yes: I must not forget.' Her eyes filled with tears. 'I must take care of Maud. I have no one else.'

'Why, there are many who——'—he had striven to say that she must remember also that there was her husband; he could not do so; the hypocrisy would have borne the aspect of derision—'there are so many——'

'Oh, that is indeed cruel——'

'I did not mean—— Why, you cannot so unjustly misunderstand me! Think of——'

'Who, then?' she demanded, with a sudden bitterness.

Mr. Herbert clasped her hand and carried it to his lips.

'*You?*' exclaimed Evelyn.

He kissed her hand, her wrist, the bracelet, the soft lace of the sleeve. It was her left hand. She relinquished it. He pressed to his lips the plain gold circlet.

'I, too—yes!—Forgive me!'

'*You!*'

'Yes, Evelyn!—And I must bear the burden by myself—oh, you need fear no importunity—no reproach, no senseless reproaches! If you are seeking the stupid triumphs of the coquette—if you seek those criminal glories——'

She wrenched her hand from him.

'You are more cruel than anyone who has ever talked to me!'

'If you need these vicious glories, the tragic triumphs of the coquette——'

'*You*—to say that?'

'Why not?—Cowardly again?—Once more, then, cowardly! Why, we are all cowards, and always cowards! Cowards, when we yield to you: cowards, if we can find our safety only when we close our eyes to you: cowards, because when we have closed our eyes upon the image that we have loved, we obstinately call it up out of the darkness: cowards, because we dare not tell you all the truths you all deserve!'

'Have I deserved this—from *you?*'

They spoke in little more than a whisper, rapidly.

'Yes, Evelyn. And listen! No one else will have the cowardliness or the courage to tell you this; to yourself you never can say it; before we separate, hear it from me. Cowardliness for cowardliness. We live in an epoch of equality. Take your equality—and listen! There is just this other cowardice: that of the woman who, with a light heart and an easy conscience, does harm, then runs away from the spectacle of the harm which she has done, or turns away, denies it, and calls us cowards if we do but remind her of the ill which she has wantonly or idly wrought.—Maud will hear me?'

'No.'

Mr. Herbert faltered. He had looked for an indignant outburst—for anger or grief; he had expected that she might protest again, or shrink. And then? Oh, then—what is it that we do when led or tortured into bitternesses, just or unmerited—what, when we see we inflict the wound? We strive to recall those bitternesses, often enough. Often enough, we suffer doubly, for we suffer with the wounded. We strive to recall what we have said in answer, perhaps, to words the bitterest—to the bitterest of words that never were recalled. Those who have been the speakers—they can forget with ease, and they forgive. But those to whom the words are spoken—do they, too, forget? They, too, can they not forget? Seldom, perhaps, in spite of preachments; and thus are pretty stories spoiled.

'Maud will not hear,' she repeated. The tones thrilled him as from the first day.

'We two, here, are overshadowed by a death. You and I have each been severed from a friend. Thank Heaven, upon you, Evelyn, rests no guilt—no indirect guilt—for it has been an assassination, not a suicide. It has been an assassination, I believe, now, for gain, by common thieves. But you killed his faith, Evelyn. For the rest of us, *this* has existed'—he raised her left hand, and pointed to the plain gold ring—'but Garth—whom you knew from childhood! This does not move you. Are you not to suffer? You murdered his faith.'

'What can that be to you?'

'In that way, souls are damned! And my own faith—I, who have been the spectator!—my own faith?' He quitted

her abruptly, moved to one of the windows, and looked out. Miss Maud was not upon the balcony.

'I have been wrong to listen to you,' replied Mrs. Ormond-Weir, ringing for a domestic. 'But as we are to "part now for ever"——'

'And you will still do harm?'

'Perhaps.'

'Again!—I implore you—say to me again—say that to me in the same tone, with the same smile, with the same regard!' He returned eagerly from the window. 'I should wish to retain it; always to think of you as you then were.'

'Was I so——' The smile and attitude had been a momentary recollection from the photographer's 'Last New' and 'Latest'—one of her effective studies, one of the studies that were most admired—but Mr. Herbert's own manner and regard had not been admiring in the least. 'Then we are to separate,' she resumed, addressing him in the mirror jauntily, 'we, client and—how do you say it?—legal adviser, acquaintances who—acquaintances that—were more than ordinary acquaintances: we are to separate! Good-bye.'

She rang again for the domestic.

'Good-bye, then, for to-day,' said Mr. Herbert, taking up his hat. 'The other "good-bye" is for to-morrow.'

'My dear Mr. Herbert—why waste your time for us? Are you—quite—indispensable?'

'For the moment I am, I think,' said Mr. Herbert simply.

'Oh, surely not!'—still smiling, with provocation, in the glass. 'But, before you go, take leave of Maud. She esteems you very highly. If you were her own brother she could not like you more. She pleased me very much last evening. She talked of you after your departure.' Mr. Herbert bowed, and crossed to the door. 'We talked of you a great deal.'

'I presume we are to see the will to-morrow,' he replied. 'That will be an informal communication. From to-morrow, a Paris agent of the firm will conduct the business in due order. Let me apologize profoundly for transgressing——'

'No.'

'I beg pardon! I have to express my apologies——'

'No.'

She turned from before the mirror, and poised herself with the familiar movement full of dignity and power which old professors can drill into the most awkward, the most plebeian of their pupils—any dunce or slattern. Once more it was the magnificent Mrs. Ormond-Weir, too regal to be likened to a queen—pah!—true queens were far above this kind of thing, these *jeux de scène!* Too often, since her marriage, he had seen her thus. 'And now for the theatrical exit,' thought Mr. Herbert scornfully—'the exit of the theatricals, with the rounded elbow, the cup of champagne waiting in the wings! Ah-h! The champagne and the flattery. Ah-h!'

'Good-bye, then, Mrs. Ormond-Weir!' said he hurriedly, advancing with outstretched hand. 'Let to-morrow be to-day.'

'No!' she answered slowly. 'You were right just now. There is the business of the—the—whatever it is—the estate. Unless you seriously, seriously prefer——'

'For shame!' interrupted Mr. Herbert. 'You know only too well——'

'You spoke crossly to me just now. Thank you for it.'

She rang, for the third time.

'I have no right——'

'Yes, you have—yes, you did! Thank you for speaking crossly. And thank you for not flattering me. It isn't my fault if people have flattered me.' She had picked up a small paper-knife, and was tapping the gorgeous cover of an album of 'views.' 'I know what you are thinking,' she continued; 'you are thinking that I have been spoilt by the flattery and adulation of men. I should speak in a very different strain to anyone but you. Spoilt? How can I help despising people when I see them so ready to be grovelling, to be cringing, and base? They have tempted me into extravagances of caprice and freak, and then I have heard and read that they have sneered. How can I help despising them, and punishing them?'

The English maidservant entered the room.

Why had the summons remained so long unanswered? And had Madame Bertaux left no indication whatever as to the hour of her probable return?

Only the last summons had been heard; the truth being,

added the domestic, that a fellow-servant, a maid in attendance upon an English family who were just going away, had paid a farewell visit to her, and, to her surprise, had referred by name to Mrs. Ormond-Weir. Apparently, it was known in the hotel that the Mrs. Conyers who had arrived some days ago was no other than—Mrs. Ormond-Weir.

'How annoying!' exclaimed her mistress. 'It will get into the newspapers; and I shall be besieged by intrusive people. How can they have known?'

With the faintest gesture Mr. Herbert indicated the mirror.

'Oh——!'

Her own movement was one of impatience and reproof. He, too, could flatter? How unwelcome was flattery—*mal-à-propos!*

'I assure you,' insisted Mr. Herbert firmly.

'It must be known, then, that I do not intend to receive. I wish Andréa would return. Do you think I have been recognised? Who can have recognised me? Is there anyone we know staying in the hotel?'

'Independently of that,' answered Mr. Herbert, 'you are as easily recognisable in any such locality as this as in the High Street of an English country-town. Your portraits.'

'My portraits?'

'They are in the windows of the principal photographers, along this very street.'

'You have seen them?'

'Some of them.'

The domestic was about to withdraw. Her mistress checked her. Had she seen these portraits? asked her mistress. Yes, she had seen them. Were they recent portraits? Yes, ma'am, if you please, ma'am—they were recent portraits. What studies, Lucy? Well, ma'am, there were some of them that were almost the last studies, ma'am; but the most part of them were months back, they were. There was one of them in the lovely costume which her mistress wore at the Grand Charity Bazaar, in the Albert Hall—brocaded . . . and then . . . so that the trimming . . . and looped up . . . the sleeves . . . which set off . . .

The visitor remembered the occasion with a fidelity equal to that of the enthusiastic maid, to whom the robe in ques-

tion had perhaps been presented when cast off. One of the stalls had been presided over by the Beautiful Mrs. Ormond Weir. What had she sold at that Grand Charity Bazaar? Strawberries: bitten in half: bitten in half by the Beautiful Mrs. Ormond-Weir: the first half of the strawberry swallowed by the Beautiful Mrs. Ormond-Weir: the second half, with the stalk adhering, sold to anybody who chose to present himself at the stall kept by the Beautiful Mrs. Ormond-Weir—that is to say, anybody with two guineas (and upwards) to expend for the same. And what a number of young, middle-aged and elderly men—married men, and single—serious men and gay—wolfish boys, and wrinkled *roués*—had crowded round that stall of bitten strawberries, with their two guineas and upwards to expend, for Charity! As he had stood near, looking on, detecting the superficial jealousies, detecting an impoverishment or two under some of these profusenesses, divining the intention of a glance here, a word there—the glance quite ordinary, the word the commonest politeness: oh, nothing that was not polite, and nothing that was not quite ordinary—as he had stood near, marvelling at it all, but chiefly at the central figure, he had pictured to himself the homes of some of these: because some of these boys had innocent sisters, for whom their brothers were as innocent as they; and there were good girls and honest boys at home for whom these wrinkled *roués* were despotic, peevish, parsimonious parents; yes, and there were the self-sacrificing wives at home, who were less beautiful than Mrs. Ormond-Weir, less fashionable—if they were even fashionable at all—and these were (invalid, sometimes, as well as self-sacrificing) wives at home who could be snubbed, or could be ignored.

For an instant, too, the man who was entitled to exhibit jealousy had stood near, looking on, and he was not jealous. It seemed to Mr. Herbert an appalling feature of that microcosmic scene that Mr. Hugh Ormond-Weir, the husband of the Fashionable Beauty, surveying them all for but one instant, had continued his indifferent walk, the one instant loaded with amused contempt. About that time, the resources were beginning to run short. They were the last resources, short of a new speculation on a greater scale; Evelyn had foolishly squandered upon her husband the whole of her private fortune. Why had he married her—

he, the man of bargains—when better bargains could have been secured? It was a love-match on both sides, he told his friends; and so it had been, doubtless; only—the interpretations of the essential term had widely differed. One other motive had perhaps guided him: the desire to control, by means of a strong feminine influence, the choleric Elliot Burroughes, his stepfather, then a widower: the desire to make quite sure of the inheritance by enlisting a feminine influence which the favourable and undisguised bias of old Elliot Burroughes had already convinced him would be irresistible. The inheritance had gone to Allan Ridgeway Garth, and Garth had not died intestate. As for the provisions of the will—'for my part,' thought Mr. Herbert, 'after all, it would not have been out of keeping with Garth's character to have devised his property to the successful rival, Hugh Ormond-Weir.'

. . . . The only other study which she had perceived, the maid was saying, was the one in which her mistress wore a silver tiara, like: and a girdle; and was reclining. It was the Cleopatrick portrait from the *tableaux vivants* at Lord M——'s, she thought; but a very good likeness, ma'am; and, besides, the name was printed.

'Why, that is quite old!' exclaimed her mistress.

Yes; as the maid had remarked to Miss Farrar, when they saw the portrait.

'I wouldn't buy that one, miss,' the maid had urged; 'it's quite an old one.'

But Miss Farrar had persisted, and so that one had been bought. It was the only shop-window of that description which Miss Farrar had inspected; it was the only copy of that study which the shop-window had contained; but, within, there were three other copies of the study on view. Miss Farrar had bought them all—all four—though notwithstanding, if you please, ma'am, as how Lucy had informed miss that they were old, quite old. When did this happen, ma'am? That very morning, when miss brought some books. Where was Miss Farrar at this moment, ma'am? In the large drawing-room, across the corridor, waiting, reading. Yes, ma'am—the carriage was quite ready: should Parkinson tell Miss Farrar?

'Madame Bertaux went out shortly before luncheon, did you not say?'

Shortly before luncheon, yes. Madame just came in, and went out again, shortly after the visit of the person who had called to see her mistress—the foreign person.

'What visitor was this?'

'Foreign; but had inquired for Madame Conyers in English. A young man; was about to state his business, but said he would return when Madame Bertaux had come back. One of the tradespeople, madame had said, when told. The young man had not stayed an instant. He had looked like a person from the tradespeople, and that was why Lucy had not paid attention, madame attending to all the tradespeople.'

When Miss Maud rejoined them she was still carrying the volume of which, on Mr. Herbert's arrival, she had been engaged in cutting the leaves.

'Maud,' said her elder sister, drawing the young lady towards her, 'I want to speak to you.'

As Miss Maud transferred the volume from one hand to the other, fragments of torn cardboard fell from between the pages. Mr. Herbert stooped to gather them together. They were fragments of torn photographs. Two of the fragments appeared to be identical. They represented the juncture of an arm at the shoulder: the arm and shoulder which had been described by Mrs. Carnaby Royster as 'the most perfect of our day;' but there were other fragments: the rest of the arm: in short, 'Mrs. Ormond-Weir as Cleopa——'

The fragments were taken from him—by Mrs. Ormond-Weir.

'Shall you accompany us to the Bois?' said she. 'Yes? —Very well. But—a moment—I must tell Maud—to try a new hat——'

He was again alone. But in her chamber, whither now went her eldest sister, Miss Maud was seated with clenched hands and scarlet cheeks.

'Why—what is this!' exclaimed in the sincerest astonishment the beautiful Mrs. Ormond-Weir.

'How *can* you, Eve?' was the passionate reply. 'Oh, Eve—how *can* you! Miss Maud started to her feet, seized the book which she had thrown down, and then threw down the book. 'How *can* you!' she repeated.

'You silly little girl,' remonstrated her sister. 'The photographs of me?'

'Yes—those horrible, horrible——'

'Nonsense, dear, nonsense! In society, no one——'

'Eve, I am ashamed of you!'

'Really, my dear child, you must not say such things as that.'

'Who is to say them to you, then? Hugh won't. I have asked him, and he only laughs at me!'

'Yes, I should think so. And when you have seen a little of society, my dear——'

'Oh, Eve!'

'Well—we will talk this over when you are more calm.'

'No; you will say what Hugh has said: that some day *I* shall be very glad to be so greatly and so generally admired! *Admired?* Do you all think that every woman must covet and scheme for admiration? And admiration such as *that!* Are we *all* to pine for such successes? And successes such as those!'

'. . . . . !'

'Would it have pleased our mother—dear mamma! —Your portraits, Eve?—All this would have shocked and utterly disgusted her. I am almost glad she has not lived to see this!—Dear mamma!'

The ladies kept Mr. Herbert waiting for so many moments that he relapsed into the gloomiest of his meditations.

'We are to part to-morrow—to part, for ever,' he soliloquized; and if I needed any reassurance of her complete indifference to the parting of the ways—why, here is the best that I could obtain! I might have passed these moments in her society. She knows how much that would have meant to me. But she will not concede it; no; is sure of me, and is treating me to a display of power—to a caprice, perhaps.'

Miss Maud sank in his esteem—Miss Maud, who could be capable of devoting so much precious time to the consideration of a hat!

They returned, however, presently, by way of the balcony —the golden-haired Miss Maud, the dark-eyed, white-browed, black-haired Evelyn. They came in with clasped hands, affectionately, but not speaking. Miss Maud was paler than her wont was, and much less girlish seemed her mien, her carriage.

'Already,' ruminated the one spectator—'here is already

the initiation into the Fashionable Beauty-hood: what, already!'

So tenderly illumined in the mild May sunshine—the sunshine suffused, under the striped awning, pink and white—the sisters were at this instant the ideals of eve and morning—the pure May morn, the all-spellful, faintly-crimsoned eve—eve of the mystic charm—the

> 'Mystic charm you weave,
> Around the heart, fair summer eve!'

Abundant evidence of her fame awaited Mrs. Ormond-Weir. The hotel servants had apparently enlightened one another as to the real social importance of the personality labelled Conyers. From the hotel servants, the news had spread to the private attendants of the ladies and gentlemen installed at the hotel, or just arriving. It was quite extraordinary—the number of menials and well-dressed men and women, whom these two handsome ladies and Mr. Herbert, as they descended towards the courtyard, found upon their path: by chance, of course, for the most part, and with vacant looks: here and there, however, with wide-open mouth and staring eyes. The comments would in general be reserved until afterwards. In Ohio and Rutlandshire, for long afterwards, there would be an identical tradition to swell the rustic murmur of the bourg. 'When we visited Paris, in the spring of ——, we stayed at the same hotel as the celebrated Mrs. Ormond-Weir, who ——' etc. 'Mrs. Ormond-Weir? Oh yes—we met her while we were staying in Paris.' So do many humble folks 'meet' folk that are not humble.

Amongst the inquisitive spectators of their departure, the dear old gentleman who read the Peerage every afternoon was discernible in the rear of impenetrably obsequious domestics. Mr. Mowbrey saw that Miss Maud was speaking of him to her companions, and he withdrew somewhat hastily from observation.

'I don't think there can be any snob much worse than the British snob,' said Mr. Herbert suddenly. He was attributing to 'that old tuft-hunter' the discovery and the fussy disclosure which had thus rendered Mrs. Ormond-Weir the object of unwelcome notice.

Mr. Herbert had guessed rightly in so far as he attributed

the fact of the disclosure to the poor, dear old gentleman, Mr. Mowbrey; but he had guessed wrongly upon that other point—the motive actuating the 'poor old dear'—this phrase was Miss Maud's, who, responding to Mr. Herbert, seemed all at once to take Mr. Mowbrey under her special protection.

As their carriage turned out of the courtyard into the Rue de Rivoli, a short, thickset, middle-aged man, grotesquely attired in ill-fitting and ill-suited garments, posed himself at the edge of the pavement, and took off his hat with an air of fatuity that was the most ludicrous in the world. He wore in a button-hole a large bunch of fresh flowers. Jerking open his light-gray coat, he stood gazing after them, his right thumb thrust into his waistcoat-pocket, the left arm dangling, as if to exhibit the waistcoat hung with festoons of a watch-chain, in new copper-gilt.

Miss Maud remarked upon the funny little middle-aged man; and they drove on. Her sister's glance had rested upon him, too, but plainly without recognition. Mr. Herbert saw that it was Benoît.

They drove onward, through the Champs-Elysées, towards the Avenue du Bois de Boulogne. By a single incident, the occurrence of a single moment—later—three destinies were determined.

CHAPTER XVII.

For Evelyn Ormond-Weir the route to the Bois might well be peopled with absorbing souvenirs. A year of her childhood, first; the years of her early girlhood; then, the first days of her marriage; the successive memories rose up now, associated with two figures—the earlier, Garth; the later, her husband.

Was it for the sake of the same memories that Garth had fixed his residence here? Madness, again: the first act, rather, of the madness that had led him ultimately into the chimerical enterprise which Andréa had one day announced to her. He had not wished to forget, then? No; it was

to remember; and, in seeking to live again through those dead years, he had broken his promise to her. How lightly, almost with a scoff, she had asked him for that promise! She had asked him, lightly, to forget the past; because the past was what *she* wished not to remember. He had promised to forget, because he comprehended. They had parted; and, with the promise which she held, she cleared her conscience.

Subsequently—last year, more than twelve months ago—when appealing to him for assistance—and for the profit of her own husband!—how had she succeeded with herself—how had she stilled her pride? By deliberately repeating to herself, beforehand, vapid calumnies which were convenient, calumnies which she had wished to think. By force of habit—the increasing force of a fostered habit—she had ended by believing that she believed those calumnies. Innocuous, indeed, they seemed at present—all those faults which she had attached so solemnly to the unpleasing Garth. Since that time, she had lived.

Memories? One crossway there was, in the Bois—they would reach it, presently—where she herself had felt that chill of the heart, where she herself had received the first buffet from the object of the adoration. On that day, vividly remembered now—on that day, whilst they were yet but newly-married, the fascinating—oh, the school-girl phrase! —the phrase of the 'young person,' or of the mincing ancient —it sickened her to think that she, *she*, she who was now the fascinating Mrs. Ormond-Weir could ever have phrased of others, of any others, no matter whom, in such a language —the 'fascinating' Hugh Ormond-Weir had by one glance, vaguely a salute, to the occupant of a carriage they had encountered at the crossway—by one answer to herself, one gesture—amply revealed the nature of his doctrine as to the rights of man.

She had nursed her own doctrines, too, in those perilous years of youth, when Inexperience, in either sex, will meditate with such Profundity. To every woman was due the unquestioning homage of every man. Every woman was to have her way; every man was to be ready for bondage and direction. The worst amongst all women were to be entitled to the deference of the best amongst all men. If

there were outcasts amongst women, they were outcasts by the turpitude of men; and for the outcasts, therefore, especially, must this undiscriminating deference be exacted from all men. To such effect as this, implying upon her own part the purest instincts and the loftiest resolves, she had profoundly meditated during that perilous period when a young and beautiful and imperious girl, thinking out all kinds of matters for herself, alone, chafes at control, and meets with no contradiction. Garth should have had the courage to oppose her—she now urged, with a sense of grievance. Instead of that he had mutely worshipped. He was consequently responsible for one half of her subsequent errors, follies, and unhappinesses. It was Garth who was responsible, she urged, for the great error which had wrecked his own life and was torturing hers. Had she not misjudged her husband? In the pride of her infallibility, had she not decided that the character of Hugh Ormond-Weir must, must be the character which she had constructed in advance for him—the character which was waiting to be fitted on to somebody, not Allan Garth—and had not that pride, that crude notion of infallibility, been in the main due to the blind adoration by Garth himself?

Here was the crossway in the road. Both carriages had been driven slowly, she remembered, and, just at this spot, the rustic signpost facing them as now, she had shrunk under the first lesson of experience.

The recollection cost her no pang now. Other lessons had been taught, no doubt. Looking back at the gradations in her experiences, it seemed as if that first chill of the heart had been deliberately inflicted, as if the urbane and assidu ous Hugh Ormond-Weir had then meant to warn her in a 'delicate' sort of way, wishing to avoid, if practicable, the more overt and the less finished methods. Experience might teach—more or less; but even where the teaching profited, the lesson came so late! Before Experience had stalked upon the scene, she loved. The self-questionings, the test, the demand, the unquiet hope which formed the utmost response that Garth had ever won from her, apart from the friendliness which dated from her childhood—all these had been lived quite through, and had been disposed of, when she met the man whose name she now bore, and

whom she had loved suddenly and ignorantly, almost with a sentiment of relief at a reaction—a reaction against the idolizings of the hapless Garth. Reactions, however, in their own turn, are exhausted.

If Allan had shown more firmness, more discernment—but, then, how many of them *could* discern? An excellent trait it was, in Mr. Herbert, this unwillingness to 'make himself agreeable.' So few men could be sympathetically silent. So few men seemed to comprehend that women could be desirous of pursuing trains of thought. But he, Mr. Herbert, too——! And to-morrow——oh, why? How hard it seemed! They leagued themselves against her, to make her feel that she was wicked. And so—because she was a woman of great personal beauty, she was ever to be debarred from intimate, innocent, and fearless friendships that might be valued?—she was never to be permitted to share in the privilege of quite ordinary—plain, homely, even ugly—women—the privilege, namely, of forming friendships with intelligent and honest men, without the dread of bringing them unhappiness?

Why must he go away to-morrow? Were they, then, to part—really, to part? Oh, why? They always said 'for ever'—men did: oh, why must they be so determined!

When they said that they should love you, they always said, for ever; and when they said that they must leave you, it was for ever, too!

Why must they be so sad and hopeless, when there was no hope for them? If you wished them not to go away from you; if you liked them and esteemed them; if they were your friends, and had been cross with you, but only because they were attached to you, it cut you to the heart to see them sad, and so determined. Oh, why—just because there was no hope for him—why should Mr. Herbert be so hopeless and so sad?

And Maud, whose estimate of Mr. Herbert had been so favourable, last evening, had avoided him to-day, and was, at this moment, barely vouchsafing a few cordial responses, as he gave himself the trouble of pointing out to her some object of interest upon their route. How haughtily she had just made that brief acknowledgment! And Mr. Herbert paid no heed. Poor Mr. Herbert! But of course he did

not mind, because—well, because—well, it was the fact—because he was in love with someone, someone else—and, of course, why should he mind? But, oh, to be so hopeless, and to be going away, and to be treated haughtily by Maud! Why should Maud judge him now less favourably than yesterday? It was silly of her, too, to fancy, inexperienced as she was, that she could judge people like Mr. Herbert. He should be asked to stay to dinner; and they would have music in the evening; and she would just remind that silly little Maud, who really was growing up to be a most beautiful woman, that she, Maud, did not know what life was, yet; that she must not allow her head to be turned because these men on horseback stared at her; and that, if she meant to begin flirtation now, if she wanted to 'play fast and loose,' and to 'blow hot and cold,' it was with somebody else, and not with Mr. Herbert, that she should experiment. And, besides, with Mr. Herbert she would be only making herself ridiculous; because Mr. Herbert understood all those things. Yes, indeed!

'What are you laughing at, Eve?' asked Miss Maud, her face suddenly lighting up with pleasure. 'I am so glad, dear—so glad to see you laugh again, dear!' Miss Maud laughed, too, like the merriest little child. Her hat was all awry; and her sister directed her attention to that fact.

Miss Maud pushed the hat backward and forward, with two careless jerks. The sisters laughed again. A pair of afternoon loungers, under the trees at the wayside, put their glasses in their eyes, and smiled engagingly. They had been observed, apparently they thought, as the carriage neared them slowly, and that little piece of pantomime had been arranged for their express benefit! Their patronizing comment was intended as a reply to the fair pantomimists, to be overheard, but it was heard by only the gentleman within the carriage.

'*Ravissante—cette petite!*'

'*Et la brune! Merveilleuse!*'

As they emerged from the carriage-drive through the wood, and crossed the broad road stretching away by the picturesque lake to the left, the greater throng of vehicles impeded their progress once or twice, and other remarks from the many groups of sauntering and stationary spectators

reached their ears. Miss Maud heard some of these; but happily some of those she heard were unintelligible to Miss Maud. Glances which pleased her there were; glances towards her sister, Eve. After all, could she help feeling proud of Evelyn in society?—and though, among all these people in carriages, on foot, and on horseback, there were numbers who stared at you in quite a rustic manner—rustic, or underbred—she supposed this was society, too: in fact, as Evelyn had explained to her, when they had driven to the Bois with Andréa, on the first morning, when there were few persons ——

'Why—that must be Mrs. Ormond-Weir!'

'Where?'

'In this carriage—the carriage just moving forward——'

Their carriage moved forward again, and again stopped. They were hemmed in for the moment. The words had been pronounced in English. In the same voices they heard more faintly—

'. . . *the* Mrs. Ormond-Weir?'

'Don't you recognise her from the portraits . . . Wonder why . . . season . . .'

The voices were lost to them. The spectators must have recognised her sister from her photographs. Not from such photographs as those which she had torn to pieces—oh, not from those! How all these people stared at Evelyn! The gentlemen and the ladies on that coach—horrid, and over-dressed, they were—how they all stared at Evelyn! How terrible it must be, to be so generally admired! How much superior Mr. Herbert seemed, to all those over-dressed, bold, and fearfully-combed men! They were all admiring Evelyn. Oh, why could not their carriage move! And just at the entrance of the Bois, again, at a corner they would have to pass, there were some odd elderly gentlemen who had noticed them, and were debating with regard to them. These elderly gentlemen had gray waxed moustaches; and they were admiring Evelyn—*that* she could perceive! How thankful she felt that *he*, Mr. Herbert, did not admire her sister Eve! She wanted to tell him that she thought him so superior; yesterday, she could have told him so—managing the approval with a joke, a silly little joke—it did not matter—he would not have laughed at her; why could she not tell

him just the very same thing this afternoon?—why should she feel constrained?—why had she pretended not to care to listen, just now, when he pointed out to her so many objects that were really interesting—very! And how good he was, to pay no heed to her just now, when she had so markedly appeared to be not listening! All these people *must* admire *him*, too ——

'*Et le gogo?*'

'*Lui? Le frère de la blonde.*'

'*Tu crois?*'

'*Mais, bien sûr! Regarde-les, seulement. Même nuance, tout-a-fait.*'

Other voices.

'Well, she certainly does resemble the portraits that one sees.'

'What, the Fashionable Beauty person? Don't mention her in my wife's hearing at home. It will only upset my wife. Do you know how my wife says that the Mrs. Ormond-Weirs ought to be treated? She says . . . . . !'

'*No?*'

'Yes!!'

'Ha! ha! ha!'

'Ha! ha! ha!'

'Ha! ha! ha!'

These further comments had not reached two of the three occupants of the carriage. The attention of Mr. Herbert and Miss Farrar had been attracted in the opposite direction. They were discussing confidentially the expanse which lay before them, at their left hand—a view of an apparently vast lake, fringed here and there with clumps of the tall, dark pine—a view of an apparent vista of far hills. The comments had reached Evelyn, however—Evelyn, whom they concerned.

Re-entering the Bois by the winding carriage-drive, they resumed their journey to the Cascade—the conventionally indispensable journey, in the late afternoon, of much that is Parisian rank and fashion, and of a good deal that is neither rank nor fashion nor Parisian. Ahead of them, the very same carriages, it seemed, that had been following in their rear, and had surrounded them; in their rear, the very same carriages and people, it seemed, that had hitherto surrounded and preceded them: along the wayside, as hitherto, the

very same pedestrians, to the right and to the left: the promenade; the show. Beauty, honours, and ambition; virtue, industry, and talent; idleness, jeering at virtue; vice, with felonious intent, the neighbour of industry; the sham parading for the true—parading, and accepted; the shams, criticising—shams that ape the exacting critic in order not to be passed over: the nullity well in front: do we not know?—are they not the same, ever—all these shows, in all the show-places?

This, that walks and waits; ambles and drives; gazes, gossips, covets; dreams the pure dream, too; slanders; speaks the truth, too, and is accused of slander: this is the show-place multitude. The shows? Do we not know them all? Honours that have been earned as well as bought; virtue that has been remarkably well rewarded; industry that turned vice out of doors, or that parted company with the felonious neighbour; perseverance that has happened to succeed; beauty wed with diffidence as well as with vainglory; beauty moved by tenderness for others as well as by the intensest egotism; very much beauty.

First and foremost in the show, beauty: that which is worth winning, well worth winning, and may be won, as well as the beauty which is not in the least worth winning, but which is worth gold; no effort; gold alone; and only can be purchased.

Next, in the show, that which follows in the train of beauty everywhere—madness: the madness which brings prices, as an offering, where prices are not valued; the madness which tenders as its offering, devotion, where only prices are acceptable; the madness which has paid to the full the high price placed upon themselves by first-and-foremosts in the show. Alas! Alas! Beauty? That which resides 'in the *seeing* eye:' that which all men have seen, though differently; still see; shall see again: that which has been known to be bestowed where unprized; that which can be observed for sale, in markets that are blessed and licensed, with honour, virtue, industry, talent, sham, nullity, vice—what not, indeed!—crowding as the purchasers. Beauty? That which we strangely assume to be an equivalent of all highest bids—the highest bids by honour, virtue, even genius, as well as by the residuum: that which may be discontented, even with the bids that

are the highest: that which has been known to desert its heart for the sake of joining a high bidder: that which has been known to desert the highest bidder, and to rejoin its heart.

And here was Beauty, photographed through the four quarters of the globe, struck into the dust by one simple sentence from a woman! It is nothing for a woman's irony to strike at earnest men, to discourage the best efforts, to traduce the noblest action, to asperse the loftiest wish; it is nothing for a woman to fret at some man's excellence—at the superiority of no matter what man, so long as he should chance to vex by his vicinity—the vicinity of the target for the toxophilite; it is nothing that a woman's irony should check instead of stimulate the endeavours of the man who would achieve, that it should hamper him and weary him until he sinks, that it should then taunt him with the achievement of some other—brand him with cowardice because he traces reasons—quote at him a crass insensibility by others, and call it strength—ha!—strike *him* down into the dust with the appalling blow of a loved hand—plunge him into lees of swinish oblivion, and then complain to his detractors—or his friends: kill him: and then complain that he has died. All this is to be nothing! We are of such stern stuff, that, even when the adored hand turns the rack, we are not to groan. But let the unerring feminine shaft transfix the spoilt woman's vain-gloriousness, oh, then!—the arrow so barbed that it may never be wrenched away; the poison prompt—what solace could we offer to such a deadly anguish as this proud woman's, but the tribute we pay rarely—tears: our tears, worth so much more than theirs! Alas, of an unfeigned sympathy, we must not offer them even that rare tribute. They would tell us we were unmanly.

It was a simple sentence; one which occurs readily to Materfamilias.

Evelyn had but just been remembering what was the due of Mrs. Ormond-Weir. Her reflections? 'Where am I? What am I doing here? Who has dared —— Someone was daring to dictate to me, to question what I choose, what I elect, to do!' Her true atmosphere was this homage which was universal, this admiration, unrestrained. Whom need she deign to regard? She had but to signify a

preference—at least, had she been free, she would have needed but to signify a preference. Her husband? Why, he was unworthy of her! Her husband? When had he comprehended that he held a prize? When had he seemed to comprehend that she was no mere ordinary woman?

What had been this dream? *She* to be suing for affection—*she* to be enslaved and patient and long-suffering! She, Evelyn Farrar, to have stooped to plan his rehabilitation! What sort of self-respect was hers, then? For all she knew, she was the common talk—the common name for a wronged woman, satisfied—the vulgar cognomen for a modern instance of grotesque infatuation.

What could be her base nature, then, to have accepted such a yoke, servilely! She had but to distribute looks—all that was needed, as she well knew, was to tempt, and tempt—and men would be false to oaths and pledges, for her—men of great worth (why, she could name them!), men of great wealth. (Was not that ALL? Who despised wealth—save those who possessed none! What woman, in her place, would hesitate? She knew her sex, she thought! What woman despised wealth?—Maud?—She was young.)

Her *husband?* It was strange how true the anonymous letters had turned out to be. Of course, anonymous charges were too vile for words; they never should be treated otherwise than with contempt; you never should believe anonymous accusations; in fact, you could not!—if you were right-minded yourself, you know, how could you?—it was your duty to forget them, always, and to tear them up into a thousand pieces—and that was just what she had done—after she had read them through, and put some of them with the rest—because, you know, you wanted sometimes to compare handwritings. But having thus—as was her duty, in plain self-defence—begun to notice, and to observe, and to lay little traps, it was quite strange how true these allegations had turned out to be. How had she borne so long with such a situation! Some of the later notes contained expressions of insulting triumph. They were from women, she felt sure. Some of the later notes had told her she was watched. Her husband wished for a divorce!

There had been one means of retaining at her side the man against whose ingratitude her whole nature now rose

up in revolt; the means which she had so strenuously attempted; the means which had failed, and whose failure might mean total ruin for her as for her husband: that, namely, of recovering for their benefit, from Allan Garth, the fortune 'bequeathed to him wrongfully.' Hugh had always counted upon the inheritance. Hugh was the step-son. Allan had no right to interpose. Allan had no right to inherit. So she had argued. But why expend further efforts, to reap ingratitude? What had she not risked, in this endeavour, to secure from Garth the restitution of what was theirs? What had she contemplated?

The monstrous possibilities of which she had been warned by Mr. Herbert, possibilities connected with the coincidence of Allan's death—her husband would have welcomed them, if he were seeking out pretexts for their divorce? If Allan had made no will, the Burroughes estate would have reverted to her husband. She would have been condemned to the position of a pensioner. A will had been found, and to-morrow they would learn its purport. If Allan had been true to all his protestations in the past, it was in her own favour—in her favour solely—that he must have made his will. This was the least he could have done. His conduct—his eccentric conduct: first, his ridiculously excessive grief; then, his theatrical disappearance; next, his absurd mission enterprise, under a changed name—had cost her many anxieties. Their friends had frequently referred to him, since her breach of the engagement. He had been mentioned in a few of the anonymous notes. Ah, he had caused her many anxieties; but she had forgiven him. A year ago she had confided to him all her difficulties; she had gone so far as to appeal to him for aid—to him, of all others!—when there were so many who would have gladly aided her; but she had wished to prove to him that her trust in him was unabated, and she had consented to accept his aid. Now—as he had made a will—it was to herself that he had most likely bequeathed everything. The Burroughes estate would therefore revert to herself! Her husband was to be her pensioner! If so, she would show herself a generous wife; she would never remind him of his unworthiness; but—he must be made to understand that there were limits, and that a woman had some pride, some independence, if men had none.

Hugh, perhaps, thought that he was to be for her, as she had been for Allan Garth, the one idol of the lifetime. He would be wrong to think so. Women were not such fools.

Hugh had seemed to seek occasions to remind her of that first love, thrown on one side so abruptly for himself. He had professed to sympathize with Allan; he had pretended that she owed him reparation—as if she, *she*, SHE could owe reparation!—and he had again reminded her, with hypocritical appearances of pity, of the fervid passages in Allan's unsophisticated, or idyllic, love-making (you called it what you liked, according to the point of view) over which they had both made merry in the early days. She winced now, as she recalled that merriment. What had possessed her? How had she been so blind? The fact was, Garth's idolatries would not have been unwelcome from the man whom she had married. From Hugh Ormond-Weir, however, they were not forthcoming. It was to arouse an emulation in him, she now remembered, that she had made those confidences as to the idyll in the then recent past (the better word of the two after all, perhaps, was 'idyllic'); and Hugh's lazy calm or insensibility she had construed to mean all kinds of wondrous passion, force, and poetry 'in reserve.' She winced again. Had she not made up her mind firmly afterwards to be infatuated? Had she not resolved that, come what might, she *would* not be mistaken? *She* mistaken! Well, yes—mistaken she had been: she might avow, all to herself, the grievous truth. But the fact was, also, that Garth's estimate of her had been the accurate one. She was above them all: above—above!

And, cited from good, honest materfamilias, one poor homely sentence was to give poor, homely Garth—the lie.

But for a scarlet face and brow, and for an unperceived pressure of her hand upon her heart, this vision from the peasant's fairyland, the Queen, Night—her eyes the troubling stars, her smile unnerving — Circe, in whose charmed cup the dead man's friend, the younger man, had now drunk deep—she, with best aspirations not extinct—the woman from whose side his duty called the dead man's friend—might have been turned to stone indeed!—the sculptor's ideal shape. A simple sentence, not indecorous, made up of a phrase or two.

* * * * * *

How vile and mean! How vile, how vile! How unsisterly! And the brutal laughter of those men! Who had heard? Had Maud heard—or Mr. Herbert? There were harmless observations which, from a woman, were more cruel than indelicacies or abuse. Oh, to escape, to escape!

That feminine irony had struck at mere presumption, not at self-respect nor honourable pride—she could not but acknowledge so much. Who, then, had taught her this presumption—who, first? Who? The man whom, just now, she had pitied—not regretted, she thanked Heaven!—Allan Garth.

Everyone had been leagued against her, because of her great beauty. Garth, too, had turned against her, in the end! Had he not refused the aid which she had gone with Andréa to ask? Had he not, after casting himself passionately at her feet—had he not risen up to his full height, and he was tall, and preached to her!—actually preached—with texts, read out from squares of cardboard, nailed to those dreadful walls! Had he not, just as in the old days, pressed to his lips passionately the hem of the dress she wore—not this dress; the . . . with . . . looped up . . . tied down . . . let in . . . —and had he not then told her to pray Heaven to blight her fatal beauty with a plague, and to blight all beauty, and to scourge mankind for worshipping Beauty and Power instead of Good and Worth? Had he not threatened them both with pestilence?

And had not Andréa made inquiries, somehow or another, from some person whom she knew—who was it?—and had they not learned that in that neighbourhood there had been fever, and that Allan himself had taken it? And since he had happened to take this fever, he had been 'strange.' It must have been since then that he had turned against her. How unfair!

She had been entertaining no doubt whatever that he would have yielded to her demand. The Burroughes estate would have been 'made over' by him to her husband or to herself. It was but right. His reiterated refusals had almost shattered her in her already impaired health. Was it for this that she had against her instincts deceitfully concealed from their lawyers all knowledge of Garth's whereabouts? Yielding to Andréa, she had resolved to address

herself secretly to Allan Garth before the news of his inheritance could reach him.

It was Andréa who had suspected, long before, what she, Evelyn, never would have guessed—the change of disposition which had prompted Elliot Borroughes to make Allan his heir, instead of the expectant Hugh, his stepson. Allan's brain must have been affected by his fever. Under the latter circumstances, which were sad, of course, extremely sad, it would not surprise her if, after their visit to him, Allan had made a will, leaving to herself, absolutely, all, and had immediately thereupon committed suicide, hoping that she might be suspected of his murder. Unjust to him? But in whom need she repose the slightest faith? Her husband had murdered her own faith.

Mr. Herbert had said that it was she who had murdered Allan's faith. Well—she was not good, as Maud was; but she was not wicked, either. If she had been wicked . . . why . . . in society . . . whereas . . . Ah, it was Maud who was above them all—far, far above them! Why could she not resemble Maud—innocent and high-souled, as she well knew her younger sister—golden-haired Maud!

The cascade lay in front of them. At the wayside were still the groups of odd elderly men, with waxed gray moustaches, and of young men, fearfully combed and afflicted with near-sightedness. Some of these had mothers and sisters to salute, or wives. Others—oh, others—— Miss Maud was really a most charming girl, with the most unsuspecting smile, and, when puzzled, with the frankest of steadfast looks——

The sunbeam gilds the mire it glances on; happily, the mire can never——happily, the sunbeam never shall be sullied by the mire.

For Maud, thought her sister, with a sudden, mute, passionate envy, and earnestness, there was yet in store that sweet awakening to a new sense of all that we could say was beautiful: the sweet awakening of strong, first love: first love, that lives with simple words, with downcast eyes, with wonder: first love, that asks for no caress, but lives on shynesses, and blushes, involuntary smiles, and absences—that dwells in an imagined halo—that wakens with a new sense of the beauties in the commonest flowers and weeds, in blue sky, and in verdure—in things that are primitive and around

us, familiar as is Memory itself, but that are not revealed unto our full sense till we waken in that halo: first love. 'And I,' thought Evelyn wildly—'I have waked—and waked again! And, at an age when some have not begun life, seriously, my life is ended! I have thrown my life away. A woman loves—and loves again. Happy for us that it *can* be so. I, too—— But I must live to watch for Maud—even if—even if what is, were not. And then she will leave me.'

A private equipage of great magnificence swept round the bend of the cross-road at the Cascade, and drew up where many princely equipages with Balsamos, from the Levant, and spurious princesses, have drawn up before and since. The occupants of this equipage were too magnificent themselves to fail in attracting the regards of all who had come forth to see. Mr. Herbert happened to observe them as he turned towards Miss Maud, and he promptly retained that young lady's attention to the wooded heights between Suresnes and St. Cloud. Evelyn had observed them, also. Leaving the Cascade in their rear, they returned through the Avenue des Acacias homeward.

Amongst the four occupants of that grand equipage, two there were of such beauty and such stateliness that—as the saying is—they would have graced thrones. These ladies were most beautiful and most stately. They took their beauty and their stateliness to various places on the Continent at various seasons of the year. They followed Fashion thither, or they led Fashion thither, by the nose. To some of these gentlemen—the young, the old: the Banker's Balance, in fine, no matter what his age: some say, the Banker, too—their origins were known. It does not signify, Evelyn had borne the surprise without a start, and she had looked on, this time, without a pang or tremor. Since her marriage, however, she had modified those wholesale doctrines as to the homages and deferences, the worsts and bests. Not that, in this particular instance, now, she cared so much about the matter. One of the two male occupants of the equipage in question had been, as Mr. Herbert had noted, Uncle Carteret's Prince—Negradska. The other was Hugh Ormond-Weir.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MADAME BERTAUX had returned during their absence; she had returned, and she had gone out again. In a note which she had left for Evelyn, Madame Bertaux explained that she had gone to visit aged people, former friends of her dear family. The invalids upon whom she had called that afternoon had been enchanted, and she had now gone somewhere else, to take relief to aged people who resided so far off that it was quite a journey, quite the other side of Paris.

Their re-entry into the hotel had been honoured by masters, mistresses, and servants with the most distressing ostentation of compliment. 'The beautiful Mrs. Ormond-Weir!'

Mr. Herbert had accepted somewhat reluctantly the invitation to remain. Why should he suffer, he asked himself. They were to part. Why should he not bid her, now, fervently, their strange farewell—attend to-morrow as the man of business—and steel himself, between this and to-morrow, to then take leave of her, formally, as though that leave-taking were not to be their last? He should apprise the husband of to-morrow's interview. No doubt the husband would attend. Evelyn would then learn that he had known of her husband's presence in Paris, and that he had—so she would be sure to put it—concealed the fact from her. He felt inexpressibly wretched. He took refuge in a garrulousness which disgusted and oppressed himself, and which, he reiterated mentally, must have reduced these sisters to the silence of aversion. That Andréa should act towards them with such little ceremony was incredible. She should not have absented herself. What was happening?

'Andréa has many friends in Paris?' inquired Miss Maud.

'She has friends—certainly,' answered her sister. 'She had not spoken to me of these aged and infirm persons. But she attaches herself—and remembers. You know how good she is—how devoted. These may be the necessitous persons whom she has frequently aided from England. She has frequently sent money from England to some former pensioners of her family.'

'I wish she had told us of these intended visits,' observed Miss Maud; 'we could have sent help to those poor people, too.'

For his own part, Mr. Herbert began to suspect that Madame Bertaux had been engaging in some fresh measure,

of indiscretion—for the best. She was evidently practising concealments. Good heavens! To be so helpless against such zeal—to know that there was such a zeal at work for those you loved—to be ignorant of the direction taken by the zeal—and to feel sure of nothing but the catastrophe! Great heavens! Here, saddening under slights and cares, and perhaps marked out by an unjust Nemesis for a blow that might be fatal, sat the beautiful girl whom people called the successful and happy woman of the world: scarce breaking the silence, now, but, even in this new severity of her grand loveliness, the infant still—by turns, it seemed, the finished woman of the world and the adorable child: here, with Evelyn herself before him, he could talk!—As for Madame Bertaux, what if she never came back at all?

Madame Bertaux did come back, however—soon after the close of dinner. She had dined with her aged friends, who dined early. Her countenance betrayed the greatest fatigue. She declared at once that Evelyn herself stood in manifest need of repose. Miss Maud, at the piano in the adjoining apartment, called to Madame Bertaux, 'You dear old best of Andréas,' to join her and be lectured seriously for not canvassing them on behalf of her infirm pensioners. Miss Maud may have kissed her governess before scolding her. At any rate there was a pause in the pianist's soft accompaniment to the lecture. When the soliloquy ran on again, the *allegro* modulated with a delicacy that counterfeited the effect of distance, no passage of any music could have more painfully affected this young lawyer gentleman who had been denouncing his own talk. To his ear that very morning, the same rapid movement, heard through the open windows of the Quai des Orfèvres, had sounded the language of exultation. Was it the exultation of an adversary?

One souvenir more, for future years: one burden more: a rapture—or a grief? It was the Fantaisie-Impromptu—more potent thenceforth than his will: strains that were to rend the curtain from before bright pictures in his mind—strains that were to comfort him?—or to be torture for him—torture and reproach?

Listening with him was the beautiful girl he loved—the infant, the woman of the world. She came to him, suddenly, her left hand again pressed for an instant to her heart.

'Thank you so much,' said she; and then she smiled at her own purposeless thanks; and Mr. Herbert saw that she

was smiling through tears. 'We shall look for you, to-morrow; good-bye, now.'

'Good-bye—Evelyn.' The voice of each was hushed.

'What shall I tell you to remember as my parting-word?' she added, with an effort.

It was with an effort, also, that the friend of Allan Garth replied: 'That you forgive me for having said harsh things.'

'I shall love you—when you have gone away—for having said harsh things.—Yes.—Good-bye.'

Mr. Herbert sought to clasp her hand, but she withheld it.

'Yes, that is true,' she repeated, still whispering; 'and I may say it, now; and—good-bye.'

'Evelyn—you know that those harsh words were wrung from me: because—you know that——'

'Yes—I know——'

'Forget them, Evelyn. They were not true.'

'I cannot forget them. They were true. They would not have been true of Maud.'

'Evelyn—to presume to judge you! Who am I—great God!—to so presume!'

'I know that you love me more than the others, or you would not have been able to say—I mean, you would not have thought it worth while——'

She gave him her tremulous hand, whispering again:

'Good-bye. How shall you think of me? I mean—how shall you think?'

'As your lover.'—'Oh!'

She moved away. Was she not living through her girlhood for the first time?

'As your lover,' repeated Mr. Herbert gravely.

'Always?'—'Always, always, always!'

'Always, then?'—'Always.'

'Good-bye.'

Andréa Bertaux retired with her mistress, chiding her for disregard of the physician's mandate. To the visitor's surprise, Madame Bertaux begged him to remain a little while, 'if he would consent to aid her with a counsel.'

The pianist, having rendered faultlessly a whole series of soliloquies by a great musician who, while he lived, suffered, and for whom that generous sympathy which comes generously after the sufferer's decease is for all time to be awarded—the pianist who, playing for her own pleasure, had played faultlessly—began to stumble at quite easy things.

Mr. Herbert, who had rejoined her, seemed to be listening with a rapt or critical intentness. But the truth was that, of the time that went by, Mr. Herbert took no note.

Madame Bertaux had been summoned to receive an extraordinary caller, almost as soon as she had withdrawn, chiding the neglectful patient. It was an extraordinary person, said the English maid; it was a man who stated that he wished for a situation; and he would not go away, because he was quite sure there was a situation for him; so far as she could understand him, he being French and disconnected in his talk, he was quite sure about the name, which he gave quite right; and therefore——

'What can this mean, Andréa?'

Was it the visitor who had called before luncheon, demanded Madame Bertaux.

No, it was not that young man, who was a handsome young man, though common. It was an elderly person—common, too, but not handsome; a short, elderly, stumpy person, if one might say so; dressed respectably; strange in his manner; from a street called the Rue de—Rue de—it was a name in China. Lucy thought it was the Rue de Kong.

Madame Bertaux, hastening for an explanation of this unaccountable visit, found herself face to face with Benoît. The concierge of No. 13, Rue de Caen! Lucy had left him in possession of the antechamber; and here Madame Bertaux heard his story. Amazement—amazement! And whose fault?

Whose fault! To whom was the fearful imbroglio due if not to herself, with her blundering anticipations, her precipitate zeal, her confident assumptions of the probable! In a sudden outburst Madame Bertaux grasped Benoît by both shoulders and shook him furiously. Had not events gone badly enough already? These embarrassments, in which she saw 'her benefactress' plunged—were they not mostly traceable to her own advisings, from the first visit paid by Evelyn to the Rue de Monceau more than a year ago? And had she not planned all this with the woman's well-known natural shrewdness, and with the sound knowledge of the world which she, of all middle-aged women who knew the world, might assuredly be expected to possess? And had not everything been planned to turn out differently? And had she not been quite sure that she was quite right? And had not everything been done and planned for the best? And now—this! This madman, after the other!

'Ah? Ah? And so you shall take service with her, shall you? You shall follow her everywhere, and be her menial, and her dog—and she shall trample on you, if displeased—and kick your jaws together, if you fail in obedience? They shall shut you up in a madhouse—*you. Toi, on t'enfermera!*'

She shook him again, and stood gasping for breath.

'*Toi!*' returned Benoît, gathering himself together. '*You?*—You are a man dressed up in women's clothes. Hands off! *A bas les pattes!*'

He released himself, and prepared to retaliate.

Madame Bertaux flung aside the curtains of the small vestibule.

'Go from here,' she commanded sternly.

She strode to the door, and threw it open.

What caused her to start back?

A figure at the threshold; the slouching figure of a young man, distinct in the brightly-illuminated corridor; a handsome pallid face, with brilliant large dark eyes.

'Manuelo!'

The young man dropped his outstretched right arm. The heavily-tasselled bellrope struck the angle of the doorway.

'Manuelo!' she whispered, staggering.

Benoît seized her roughly.

'*Oui, ma mère,*' answered the young man, entering, and dragging off his high cloth cap with a nonchalant obeisance. '*Oui—c'est moi! Ton fils!*'

'Hush!—I forbade you to approach me, did I not?'

'*You!*' repeated Benoît to her, with a savage scowl—'you are a man dressed up in women's clothes. *V'là pour toi!*—take that!'

The knife flashed in the air. The new-comer caught the wrist, however, of the hand that clutched the knife.

'My old *papa* Benoît!' said he, holding the hand aloft—'gently, old *papa!*—That is my mother.'

With an exclamation, Madame Bertaux recoiled from them both.

'When I was a little boy about a place called Ratcliffe Highway, old Benoît,' continued the young man tranquilly—'a place that's in London—*that's* what we used to do with things like those!'

With his left hand he hung his high cloth cap upon the fist that clutched the knife.

'Go from here, both of you! Wretches! Wretches!—Go!'

'*Voyons*, mamma,' expostulated the young man—'I'm short of money.—Benoît, we'll drink together presently. Put that knife away, old Champenois! On the same errand, but—first? eh—eh?'

'I wish I may be stabbed with it, if I know *you*,' muttered Benoît, mechanically obeying.

'No!—You can't say *I've* been in your house, old Innocent!' was the jaunty answer.

Madame Bertaux rushed to the door communicating with the corridor.

'Oh, I closed it,' her son said in English.

Before she could return, Lucy had made her appearance at the extremity of the antechamber.

'Well, I never!' exclaimed Lucy. 'Tradespeople to call at this hour of the evening! The young man, madame, that has called already.'

'Yes—I had not remembered.' Madame Bertaux spoke hurriedly. 'Go to your mistress—she has overtaxed her strength—remain with her until I can relieve you—I, or Miss Farrar——'

Lucy repressed a yawn, and disappeared indolently.

Benoît removed his gaze from the young man's countenance.

'It's true,' he admitted—'it's true what you say. But you're from the quarter?'

'The Quartier Caïn? Not I, my old father Benoît! But I've been there—on a Sunday afternoon. And I know Somebody, and Somebody knows you, and I've paid for your white *eau de vie* at the corner. Ha, ha, ha! Now guess.'

'He has never entered your house?' demanded Madame Bertaux, in a low tone.

She grasped Benoît by the arm earnestly.

'*A bas les pattes*,' growled Benoît, shaking her off.

'Why don't you ask *me?*' said the young man.

'M. Benoît?' appealed the mother.

'No, I've never seen you in my house,' answered Benoît slowly.

'Thank heaven!' murmured Madame Bertaux, clasping her hands. 'Not *that!*'

'But I've seen you somewhere,' continued the Champenois.

'Now guess who the Somebody is.'

'My nephew, Jean?'

'No.'

'Pho-phonse, of the fortune-teller?'

'No.'

Benoît hesitated.

'I don't care who it is,' he then said, relapsing into apathy. 'I am here to take service. I shall be taken into service.'

'Guess, *mon vieux papa!*—M. Renaud!'

'Ah—he was kind to me,' replied Benoît vacantly.

'M. Renaud?' exclaimed Andréa Ruaz, *née* Bertaux.

'I went to him this morning,' muttered Benoît. 'I did not see him, but I thought of him; and I went—to ask—but I did not ask; he took something away—I thought he took something—when I thought of him—but I did not know why——'

'Manuelo, you must not stay here.'

Benoît continued in a dull reverie—'And then I saw the other, this one, with the sharp voice, clack, clack, clack—the one that asked the questions. I thought—She is asking questions of M. Renaud. Judge if I followed her.—And then, here, at the portals of the hotel!—A chariot.—They all gazed as I did. They were all envious of *père* Benoît. I said—I am the concierge of the Rue Caïn, 13; I said that to them: No. 13, Rue Caïn.'

'Manuelo! save us from this madman!'

'And the *oseille?*'

'The——?'

'The *galette?*'

'Recollect, if you can, that you are speaking to your mother.'

'Well—the funds—the money!'

'I have no more. Vagabond! Oh, worthy son of your villainous father!'

'I don't ask *you* to give me any more. You said you couldn't, long ago. It's for the fine lady here to'—he tossed his head significantly, and took a few slouching steps about the room—'buy a little silence.'

'What do you mean?'

'And I came here to see her, not you. I came here to see *you* this morning; but I've come here to see *her* now. And let me give you a hint, mamma.' He glanced at Madame Bertaux sharply over his shoulder, and then sidled towards her. 'Make our fine lady buy, or—part company with her! What? A handsome fellow like me to be kept short of money! Look at your son. You used to be proud of his beauty. You used to be always writing for me to send you fresh photographs. How am I to go out with my friends, and enjoy myself? I love to be generous, and generous is what I've always been. Let people be generous to me, then—and I'll be still more generous to other people!' He crossed to Benoît, who, to all appearances, had forgotten them both. 'That is talking English, *père* Benoît. But to-night you shall be drunk with me in French!'

Madame Bertaux sank down speechless. The subdued sound of a piano, hitherto heard continuously, now ceased.

'At twenty-five, a head like mine to be wearing a *casquette!*' He spun his high-braided cloth cap up to the ceiling, and as it came down caught it on two fingers. '"Work?" I've never worked yet—and I'll think of work now less than ever. I hate deceit, mamma, and I've deceived you long enough. Besides, you're out of funds. You've kept me short at times, mamma, but now your handsome son shall trouble you no more. Your son has found a gold-mine!—Work?' He moved to the mantelpiece, and, resting upon his elbows, studied his own reflection in the mirror. 'They've never failed me, these poor features,' said he; 'but—I'm generous, I'm too generous! A fellow like *me* to think of a life of work! Do the most handsome women ever think of a life of work? And if they do, *I* don't; and as I *am*, they're satisfied with me! But I'm like you, *ma mère*—I'm generous.' He smiled to himself in the glass, without vanity, critically, as if he were appraising goods and values. The face reflected was in a brilliant Spanish type; the teeth even, and, as the saying is, of a pearly whiteness; the lips red; the complexion almost as pearl-white as the teeth; the eyes wonderful—dark brown rather than black; the dark hair short and curling; the features—inasmuch as Apollo was a god—godlike. Were Apollo ever portrayed with moustaches,

his resemblance to this young man must have been impaired. Evidently Manuelo Ruaz shaved with scrupulousness; but only upon his upper lip was there visible that faint shade of blue which a fond mamma might have likened to a deep tint in mother-of-pearl. 'And now I've got some silence to sell,' he resumed deliberately; 'and I shall be no more a burden on the mother that cannot send me a £20 note from England, or my thousand francs, without teaching me to be hypocritical in religion, without preaching to me about "work," and without depressing my spirits by threatening stoppage of the supplies.'

'I told you not to communicate with me—in no way to communicate with me—during my stay in Paris,' said Madame Bertaux, with energy. She rose to her feet. 'How dare you disobey me?'

'It's in your own interest. I've got silence to sell to people who've got fortunes to buy it with—fortunes that they can't keep if they don't spend money on my silence.'

'What does all this mean? Explain yourself—and rid me of the misery of your presence. Go back to your vile associates. Perhaps I may consent to speak to you to-morrow.'

'No, no! To-morrow the fine lady and the other will have run away. Listen! I know somebody—not M. Renaud, this time—who shall prove at the Assize Court that the Englishman of the Rue Caïn neither committed suicide nor was murdered by the man whom M. Renaud thinks is the assassin. That somebody could hear—and overheard. That somebody shall prove that our street mission Englishman was murdered by the fine lady and the other Englishwoman who called at No. 13 in the evening, and remained with him a little over one hour and a half. My vile associates? And yours?'

'*Misérable!*'

'Ah, you could only dole out a little money to me, you could spoil my temper with your sermons? *Your* money is earned—yes, you earn your money from them—yes! But how have *they* come by their money—these Englishwomen? By poisoning with chloroform—poisoning people who are in their way?'

Madame Bertaux sprang forward, as if to check his further utterance. With the same slouching gait the young

man moved away from her, swinging his cloth cap defiantly.

'And tell them,' he added, 'to pay—and regularly.'

'The other was not an Englishwoman,' whispered Madame Bertaux, with concentrated anger.

'She was! The somebody—my vile associate—heard them talking with him. It was not French; it was English, the whole time. Let them pay.'

'Look me in the face,' went on Madame Bertaux. Her son, however, again avoided her. 'When did you see that lunatic last—before this evening, I mean?'

She pointed to Benoît, who, seated awkwardly on the edge of a chair, was inattentively muttering, and was smoothing his hair.

'Benoît?—How can I remember?—Let them pay, or I denounce them.'

'Denounce the fine lady, then, and her companion!' returned Madame Bertaux. 'Denounce the companion, then, *surtout!* It was I.'

'You?' The young man's surprise was clearly unfeigned. 'You, *ma mère?*' He seemed to cast or fling his high cloth cap on to the back of his head. '*Sa-a-cré bonsoir de tonnerre!*'

'I myself.'

'And *I* never guessed—after the inquiries which you wrote to me to make for them—after tracing him for them—for you!—after——! And I never guessed! *J'en suis vert!* See what it is to esteem your mother! And so *you* lent a hand, mamma? Bravo!'

Mr. Herbert and Miss Farrar appeared at the entrance from the private apartments. Mr. Herbert was about to take leave. Recognising the distraught Benoît, he stopped, astonished. Madame Bertaux assured Miss Maud that she should rejoin them in one instant. The two figures withdrew again.

'Make me a marriage with that, if it has fortunes,' continued Manuelo cynically—'if that English blonde has fortunes, make me a marriage with it, and I am silent. *Elle se payera ma tête.*'

He had acknowledged the young lady's presence with a bow of easy, native grace, and the bow he repeated at these words, with an exaggeration of the grace.

'Brutish ruffian—base and brutish ruffian,' sobbed his mother hysterically—'blasphemer!'

'Oh, but, mamma—gently! And my pocket-money?'

'To-morrow—I will come to you, to-morrow. Ah, *ciel!*'

'To-morrow? It's a little inconvenient. I've invited friends for this evening. And I've only seven *sous*. And they're handsome ladies who are unhappy if they can't see their coachman throwing champagne about the road, before the watercart arrives, in the morning.'

'To-morrow, at your address. I will come. Why were you not there to-day?'

'What, have you been there? Oh, I'm never at my address.'

'Be there to-morrow, then.'

'Sunday? *C'est dur.* Make it the afternoon. If I'm not at home, ask for To-tole, the Marquis. Then they'll tell you where to find me. But—no slips of memory!'

'Go!'

'No slips of memory, or—my friend tells all he knows to M. Renaud. I'm sure he would—I couldn't stop him.'

'One word. Your associate and Renaud? Explain.'

'Renaud has sent for him. He would enrol my friend in his police. A good thing for my friend's friends, if he joined Renaud's police. Ah—ha!—come, old Benoît.' He grasped the Champenois by the arm. 'Renaud wants my friend for his knowledge of the Faubourg St. Antoine. My friend could have helped him in this Rue Caïn case, said Renaud; but that case was all over; it was suicide: "Suicide," said Renaud to him, in the strictest confidence, "until I put my hand upon a gentleman who is high placed in society." But *we* could tell him'—the speaker burst into a sneering laugh—'we could tell him of a fine lady, and——' He laughed again. 'Good-night, Benoît.'

'Rid me of this creature, too.'

Madame Bertaux pointed to Benoît, and turned upon her heel.

When roused, however, Benoît persisted obstinately with his application to be taken into service. He was to go back to his village in the Champagne country, and to kill a miser, he told Manuelo Ruaz, nodding and frowning, and running his fingers through his bushy gray hair; and the radiance

and the splendour which was to lead him to his country had already smiled upon him and would take him into service.

'How is this?' exclaimed Manuelo. 'I thought he had come upon my errand and wanted shares! What's he raving about? I've heard him joked about a fit like this, when he came back from a visit to his village. It's a sunstroke back again.—Then it's true, as they say up in the street there—that it was a magnificence, the dark beauty?—Promise him, *maman*.—You hear, Benoît? They'll take you into service. You must come away with me; and then to-morrow you'll come back. Be *beau*, to-morrow; and they'll take you into service!'

Benoît picked up his hat, advanced to Madame Bertaux, and stooped to kiss her hand humbly.

'I will go home to tell my wife this good news,' said he. 'My nephew Jean, who is her sister's son, and an excellent nephew, shall give me his best clothes.'

The young man laughed again, unpleasantly—overcome by a sudden sense of the grotesque.

'A very fine lady and her companion!' he repeated. 'Ah—ha! ha!—You shall deny that it was you, mamma—and my friend shall swear it was the English blonde we saw just now! Two fine ladies! Ah, ha!—Remember! To-Tole, otherwise Anatole, the Marquis.' He drew Benoît after him, and at the door burst into a polysyllabic boisterous oath. 'Sleep well, mamma!' he added—'and to the fine lady, pleasant dreams of murdered people and money.'

Alone, Madame Bertaux stood for some moments motionless, her fingers pressed tightly upon her eyes and temples.

Mr. Herbert took leave at a late hour. Before his departure he had heard the story of a life—the life of Andréa Ruaz, *née* Bertaux.

CHAPTER XIX.

PREFERRING to despatch Detective Toppin to the Rue Marbœuf address with which Mr. Hugh Ormond-Weir had furnished him, Mr. Herbert lingered for some time with Uncle Carteret, who was deeply immersed in the details of a great artistic project. Mr. Toppin's early morning call passed unregarded to-day by Uncle Carteret. The latter had been speaking to an illustrious Bohemian, in his club, of that ancestor of his who had gone out with the French in the Third Crusade. With a graphic power that was absolutely remarkable, by Gad—Uncle Carteret related: not altogether free from certain testinesses, at the same time, as though he divined unexpressed ironies, and wished that the other would 'out with them,' so that the project might be proved to be a positive historical necessity!—that illustrious man had immediately developed a scheme by which the Carteret Gibbs Children's Ward of the International Hospital could be both embellished and additionally endowed. A noble canvas was needed for the Children's Ward. It should be hung between the two windows. It should be painted by—well, that did not matter: the Bohemian himself, who was a very short, stout man, asthmatic, was so worn out with climbing up and down his ladders to paint his gigantic pictures that he, perhaps, could not undertake any fresh commissions except as the most special favour; but the subject of the canvas should be 'Ughtred Stephen Anselme Cartereyt, Ravaging Palestine.'

Mr. Herbert abandoned Uncle Carteret to his meditations. That morning's *Galignani*, which he carried away with him, contained the intelligence that Mrs. Ormond-Weir had arrived in Paris, and was staying at such-and-such an hotel, Rue de Rivoli.

This interview, to take place presently, would terminate his mission here. At its close a formal leave-taking and—the commencement of a new existence for him: the commencement of a broken life. Were they to meet again, ever? Time was a great healer, people said. Time dulled our faculties; perhaps Time dulled our pains. Perhaps in years to come he would be able to meet her calmly; she might rally him upon all this in years to come; he would

be an 'old flame' who had been 'hard hit,' but who had 'travelled,' and had 'got over it'—and that of course was 'just like a man'—and tweedle-dum, and tweedle-dee. And Garth? Oh, *he* hadn't taken matters like a man, or like a gentleman—he 'hadn't acted at all sensibly.' It was impossible to argue with a logic so infernal. And these were the logicians who pretended to be rational beings, and who argued!—charming jesters, who pretended that they wanted to be taken seriously, in all serious businesses of life!

Madame Bertaux formed another type. When younger she could not willingly have caused unhappiness to anyone. She still meant well. In everything she did she meant well still; she acted for the best always, and she tended towards that frame of mind which justifies itself in stopping at nothing. Was she to continue to reside with Evelyn and with Miss Farrar? He foresaw calamities. This impulsive 'acting for the best' might end by deadening all reflection; it excused all ways that were the most pleasant and the most easy; it excused the clumsiness or the shallowness of men and women who, in their conceited haste, blundered; and it was woefully infectious, too!

A sad story, Madame Bertaux's! From the account which last night she had given him of her own life, she had had a loathsome scoundrel for a husband; and her son, who had hitherto deluded her by professions of piety and filial respect, turned out to be a cynical young desperado. That son, an infant of the ruffianism of East End alleys, had graduated in low vice amidst the Paris haunts to which his father had escaped from West-End London. Through all these years his mother had believed in him because he was her son. She had believed the letters which he wrote, as a boy, at his father's bidding, to the address with which she had furnished them. She had believed his own letters, written after his father's condemnation to the galleys; she believed him when he wrote, in a sort of cant picked up in East-End so-called mission rooms, that Christian people had had compassion on the shorn lamb and the fatherless boy, and that oil would be poured upon his wounds, and he should be saved. Transferring to her son the allowance which she had regularly forwarded to her husband, she had consented to his remaining with those Christian people in Paris, who would educate him, watch over him, and sur-

round him with the comforts which she was willing to pay for at a high rate, so long as, in return, she could feel sure that her son was pursuing his expensive studies for his profession. What profession? He had tried so many, and she had paid so many premiums for him! In her admirable fidelity to the daughters of her benefactress—to the sisters, Evelyn and Maud—she had resolutely persisted in the line of conduct adopted, years earlier, towards her husband. For these two sisters, Andréa Bertaux, their governess, their companion, trusted by their mother, stood alone in the world. Their mother had known of her unhappy marriage; but that was all. To no one had she avowed the existence of her son; and she had been looking forward to the moment when she might with pride acknowledge the young Manuelo—a paragon, as exemplary as he was beautiful!

Of late she had been thinking that that moment had arrived. During the past year or two, the letters which were written to her by the affectionate, devout, and virtuous Manuelo had convinced her—she begged and supplicated Mr. Herbert to believe this: on her knees she prayed him not to render her an injustice—that this child's nature was her own, that in this child of theirs lived, not her husband, but herself. The excellent qualities, the high moral qualities, of the young man had forced her to recognise this fact. With tears in her eyes, she had thanked heaven for it. Manuelo, her son, was worthy of her; Manuelo, banished from her since his boyhood—seen but twice, and then by stealth, since the disappearance of his father—the infant whom she had seen again in cherubim by Murillo—her son was to redeem her own error and his father's villainy! Under those happy circumstances, she had taken him into her confidence.

She had taken her son into her confidence about six months ago, she related, in broken accents. It had been necessary to warn him that her pecuniary resources might begin to fail. The Ormond-Weir establishment had been extravagantly conducted. Its head was a prodigal; and the elder daughter of her benefactress, added Madame Bertaux, had committed ruinous follies in the course of an infatuation which it was wrong to term inexplicable seeing that it was shared by older women than Evelyn, by women of better family than the Farrars—women far richer than the Farrars had ever been, and some of them as young even as Miss

Maud. If Hugh Ormond-Weir had been free, there was now a most advantageous marriage which he could make. Madame Bertaux had, of course, watched matters closely. Hugh Ormond-Weir was not free, however; and, even if he had been free, the papa and brother of the infatuated damsel from the Colonies—the match in question—she was a minor; her papa owned millions, and meant to own millions more—would have stipulated for 'something on the other side, too:' that was well known, remarked Madame Bertaux, amongst the *chasseurs* of this *belle curée*, the damsel, a minor. Had it not been for the unmistakable determination of the Colonial papa to cut his daughter off with something merely nominal in the event of her espousing somebody unwelcome to him, and not to give his daughter away in any such spirit as that of payment of dashing Guardsmen's debts, by this time Mrs. Ormond-Weir would have been *délaissée*, protested Madame Bertaux, and the damsel, a minor, would have parted with papa and brother, and there would have been a runaway match, and scandal, humiliation and wretchedness for the deserted wife, the latter's immediate retirement from society, and a divorce-suit instituted by Mrs. Ormond-Weir.

If this were to happen, after all! Mr. Herbert endeavoured unsuccessfully to dismiss the thought as he recalled the confessions made to him by Andréa Bertaux. He found himself contending that a *dénouement* of this kind could not possibly humiliate either Evelyn or—himself!—and that the time had gone by when it could render her unhappy.

As for the social prospects of a new Mrs. Ormond-Weir, had remarked Madame Bertaux, Hugh was such a splendid, handsome, generous fellow that no one would refuse to pardon him. He spent his money so royally—upon charities and churches, as well as upon himself—that everybody would be glad to see him back again, *plus* a young wife with a papa who owned millions, and meant to own more. Ormond-Weir cared neither whence his money came, nor whither it went.

And London society had left off pardoning these things. London society *fêted* them, now.

She had obtained a brief interview with her son—proceeded Madame Bertaux—when visiting Paris hurriedly with Mrs. Ormond-Weir, rather more than twelve months

ago. They had paid a hurried visit to the then residence of M. Garth, Rue de Monceau. M. Garth had been most painfully agitated by their call, but he was no doubt consoling himself for his disappointment in the mood of a practical philosopher. At once, however, he had agreed to extricate the Ormond-Weirs from their immediate financial embarrassments. Madame Bertaux had predicted that he would do so. It was she who had prevailed upon Evelyn to make that appeal. From Evelyn's childhood, M. Garth had been devoted to her—'I remember it vividly, sir,' reflected Madame Bertaux—'I could recount to you a thousand instances. Well, I said he would be grateful to her for appealing to him in her difficulties—the difficulties of her husband, I ought to say—and I was quite right.' On the occasion of that visit she and her son had met: 'The delight of that meeting, sir'—their first meeting, after so many years. She had constantly received his portraits, and was prepared for the close resemblance which he bore to one whose miniature she kept still, though——!' But that other Manuelo, dead since at the galleys, possessed a nobility of carriage and a grave, poetic cast of feature which marked the Spanish type with more distinctiveness. Her son had shown a French vivacity which charmed her, and she had been delighted, also, by the severe homeliness, the Methodistical shining-black, of his attire, reminding her (together with the narrow starched white cravat, and the broad-brimmed, low-crowned, soft felt hat) of the wholesome English influences amidst which he had been reared. On the occasion of that hurried interview, she had embraced him with deep thankfulness. They had both wept. '*Hélas, monsieur*—I was a mother!'

During the following six months she had supplemented the periodical allowance to her son by two substantial premiums which had been required by successive employers in whose service he had wished to enter. These employers had had the indentures drawn in such a manner as to enable them to cancel them upon a trivial pretext, and to defraud him of the high premiums. Her son had scrupulously forwarded his copies of the indentures, and their fraudulent character was quite manifest. She had supplied him with funds for the prosecution of these infamous parties. Her son then wrote to her that, before the threatened

vengeance by the law, those infamous parties had decamped. She could perceive now that, latterly at any rate, the life he had been leading was one of reckless debauchery, in company that might be high or low, according as his own resources varied. The disreputable expedients by which he subsisted, when penniless, were but too obvious now, she feared. The discovery had been a terrible blow. If not a thief himself, he had become, she feared, the associate of habitual thieves; he had become, perhaps, the comrade of assassins—men, or women, who could be hired to take life. There was a moment last night at which a dreadful suspicion had crossed her mind. For a moment she had been overwhelmed by the suspicion that he himself—that in her rash confidences to him within the last few months—that the temptation might have occurred to him—but, happily, that fear was groundless, although the reason for dismissing the fear as groundless involved another suspicion of a dreadful character, indeed!—a suspicion entertained by her son towards herself—his evident suspicion that the Englishman of the Rue Caïn had been poisoned by two female visitants, of whom one had been herself—his mother.

Warning him that her resources were no longer to be counted upon—the break-up of the Ormond-Weir establishment being then clearly within view—she had written to her son, some months ago, impressing upon him the absolute necessity of selecting his profession without further loss of time—of providing himself, in fact, with permanent means of livelihood. He replied that he wished to labour in the *vignes du Seigneur*, and that in adopting this pious vocation he should receive, he felt convinced, not only encouragement from her to whom he owed his being, but a permanent continuance of her material aid. A further epistle, of such beauty that she could not even now regard it as altogether false, had contained the statement that in a revelation he had seen the great works he was to accomplish by humble ministrations in the vineyard, throughout the large towns of France—great works due to his mother's unfailing pecuniary aid—that his mother was to be 'blessed in the fruit,' etc.—and that she need only rest in patience, and obediently; for the wherewithal would be provided unto her: ours not to ask, ours but to serve and have faith. With her great experience of the world, however, she had known that the

wherewithal would not be so readily provided: to say so much was not to be lacking in faith: her son's pronounced vocation for French Protestantism had quite drained her resources. Still, she had lived on in the confident anticipation of being enabled, one day, to point to her son with pride. Thus had she argued, confessed Madame Bertaux in a dejected, miserable tone—thus had she been deceived. Was there not every excuse for her, when, later, she wrote to her son with full particulars of the situation?

The Ormond-Weirs were reckoning upon the rich inheritance from old Mr. Elliot Burroughes, the stepfather. But she herself had remarked in Mr. Elliot Burroughes symptoms of a changed disposition with regard to his stepson, Hugh. The story of Allan Garth, son of his own successful rival, had come to the ears of the rapidly sinking invalid, whose character blended very curiously the opposites of sympathy and harshness, vindictiveness and generosity. The name of Allan Garth had been frequently upon his lips towards the end. Madame Bertaux had then resolved upon the step of communicating with Garth entirely on her own responsibility. She had written a formal note to him, as a first measure, announcing a probable visit by herself. That note was never answered. She had then written to her son, desiring him to present himself, on her behalf, at the address in the Rue de Monceau. Garth had disappeared.

Her object? To ask of this man, whose devotion was so absolute, that which the others never could have asked of him! To serve a benefactress. To spare a pride.

She had succeeded in tracing Garth through the instrumentality of her son. Manuelo had at first neglected the task confided to him; excusing himself, in brief correspondence, by 'Christian duties,' the pursuit of which she now saw to have constituted his habitual pretext with her for the avoidance of all effort, the evasion of all definite business. She had then explained to him how nearly his own interests were affected by this matter. Within a week, he had identified the missing Garth. It seemed that he had already been aware of the fanatical street mission of one Allèn, known in a populous district of Paris as the mad English preacher. The establishment of the mission was at that time recent. Her son had friends, however, in that district, and one or two of them, assisting the said Allèn in his good

work, at the outset, had called upon British residents and had collected subscriptions for him, without his knowledge: the presentation of the total having no doubt formed a joyful surprise to the founder of the mission, M. Allèn, otherwise Garth. The latter possessed a certain private fortune; but, if necessary, he could have subsisted upon his mission; and he professed to teach his language, too. Obviously, he did not stand in need of the rich inheritance from Elliot Burroughes, Esq.! When M. Burroughes passed away—*le pauvre cher homme! Que Dieu ait son âme!*—he had left the will of which Mr. Herbert was fully cognizant. The universal legatee was Allan Ridgeway Garth. Hugh Ormond-Weir was only the contingent reversioner. If Garth were dead, Hugh Ormond-Weir would inherit: not otherwise—putting on one side the hypothesis of Garth's insanity; because, as M. Ormond-Weir had himself remarked to her, before the estate came out of—what was it, monsieur? Lunacy?—The Court of Chancery?—they would have had time to be ruined over and over again. Only by the death of the street-preacher, Allèn, could Hugh Ormond-Weir come into the fortune which was (was it not, monsieur?) rightfully his—unless the street-preacher, Allèn, parted voluntarily with the inheritance.

There was every reason to assume that he would at once part with the inheritance: that he would make it over to the woman for whom he would have shed the last drop of his blood: and so she, Madame Bertaux, had informed her son; whose future thereby became assured.

And so she had informed Evelyn herself, who indeed entertained no doubts upon the question, but shrank (just as Madame Bertaux had foreseen! Had she not been right all through—up to a certain point?) from the ordeal of making the request. As soon as she, Madame Bertaux, had ascertained the Rue de Caen address of Allan Garth, some months ago, she had persuaded Evelyn to send him a little friendly note of forgiveness—forgiveness for the anxieties which he had brought upon her by his frantically persistent attachment. M. Garth had immediately responded, in the most beautiful spirit. Never, he had solemnly asseverated—never could his love for her die out. There was no sacrifice he would not make to ensure her peace of mind and happiness. Might he die for her? His life was hers. 'I was right, you

see, monsieur,' commented Madame Bertaux, with despondency. That letter they had been unable to find, subsequently. It had, nevertheless, certainly been written. Guided by the advice of Madame Bertaux, as a woman of great experience of the world, a woman whose hair was gray, Evelyn had consented to exhibit total ignorance of M. Garth's whereabouts, when those consultations had been held at the offices of the family lawyers, Gray, Longley, and Gray, Budge Row, Cannon Street. The deed of gift, executed by the universal legatee, had better come upon them all as a surprise—another joyful surprise. Madame Bertaux had intended, at all hazards, to keep Evelyn's name out of the negotiation. After all, the transfer would have amounted but to restitution—ordinary restitution, prompted by a clear sense of duty!

The worst of it was that, when Madame Bertaux, carefully excluding Evelyn's name, had opened that negotiation, and the moment duly arrived, Allan Garth paid no heed to her. She then judged it indispensable to obtain Evelyn's personal intervention. She accordingly planned a visit into Sussex, and, thence, their departure—secret; yes, it was undoubtedly secret; she had deemed it advisable for Mrs. Ormond-Weir to travel under an assumed name—for Paris. Expressly abstaining from preparing M. Allan Garth for any communication on the part of the woman who had been for him an object of idolatry, she had again proved to Evelyn herself—the daughter of her dead benefactress—how consistently she had been right. The effect upon Allan Garth—the effect of this unexpected visit by the idol of dazzling loveliness whom, a womanly child, an imperious girl, he had loved so tenderly, for so many years—had been extraordinary indeed. He fell at her feet, and then——he ordered her to implore the pardon of heaven. He was mad. He was very much changed.

To their astonishment, they had no sooner acquainted him with the distressful situation of the Ormond-Weirs than he proposed to place at their disposal the whole of his private fortune; and they had no sooner acquainted him with the tidings of his own inheritance than he proposed, of his own free will, to make over to them the Burroughes estate in its entirety; and he had no sooner joined these two proposals than he attached to them conditions which

were quite unacceptable—indeed, insane. Evelyn was to renounce her worldly life—selfish, carnal, and pernicious, this madman called it—she was to renounce, in fact, everything for which the restitution of the Burroughes inheritance had been required—the very air she breathed; and her husband was to quit for ever that licentious, wicked, and destructive career which marked him out for fame in a world of sin. 'I am to overcome Apollyon,' he had exclaimed: 'I am to meet Apollyon, and to vanquish him,' he had exclaimed: 'but not by the sword, nor by the sulphurous flame,' he had exclaimed; 'by teaching him humility,' he had exclaimed—'by humbleness and conversion.' Despite their horror, and their consternation, they had been unable to subdue their sense of the grotesque aspect of these extravagances. His reason must unquestionably have been affected by a fever which had laid him low, and of which he spoke as of the purification of his soul. In spite of the gravity of their situation, they had perforce indulged in a smile at his drollnesses of phrase and figure; and there was no harm in that, *certes*, because demented people could not know—how could they, being demented?—that you were smiling at them. These droll ungracefulnesses of pose and gesture had recalled to both Evelyn and herself some ludicrous passages in the sane past. Of course, if they had known that death was so near—! But how could they know!

Before the morning, he was dead.

'And, now, sir—I think that I ought not to conceal from you the terrible suspicion which has oppressed my mind,' Madame Bertaux had concluded, in hushed tones, and with unfeigned alarm: 'You will scout the suspicion, but I must confess it to you: I suspect, of the murder of unfortunate M. Garth, the husband of my poor child—for I may call her so: I suspect that her husband contrived his murder.'

Mr. Herbert had neither scouted the suspicion nor concurred in it.

'I had passed many weary hours in the endeavour to procure a few words with my son; I had spent the entire day in my fruitless endeavours to encounter him. Monsieur—it needed but my visit to the neighbourhood in which he lives—it needed but the most ordinary inquiries for him, but the most ordinary comments upon him, by his vile, jesting associates—for these eyes to see him, Manuelo, as he is,

and for these eyes to be dried up with a mother's bitterest, tearless grief. Happy those mothers who can weep—monsieur! Happy all those whose grief can flow away from them in tears!'

'You had not met with him at all, since your arrival?'

'We had not met since the occasion of last year—more than twelve months ago. Writing to him, however, from the hotel, I forbade him to approach me—yet. He came to-night upon the errand—the extortion of hush-money—which I told you of in our first words. If I comprehended, rightly, sentences which fell from him, the man suspected by M. Renaud to be guilty of this murder—of its instigation or committal—is a man high-placed, a man of good social position. Yes; it was her husband whom I suspected, even before that casual statement fell from Manuelo. But—her husband? How?—without visiting the scene—without visiting Paris! He is far from here.'

'He is not far from here,' Mr. Herbert had replied; and he had then informed Madame Bertaux of the incident at the Cascade.

And that incident had not been at once mentioned to her by Evelyn herself! Madame Bertaux grasped breathlessly at inferences. She, then—Andréa Ruaz, *née* Bertaux!—she, and her son!

'Secrecy, monsieur, upon all that I have confided to you as to my own life, as to my son—absolute secrecy!' she had implored Mr. Herbert. 'Because——' if Hugh Ormond-Weir should chance to learn the share which under her own direction had been taken, months ago, in the discovery of Garth's whereabouts, unacknowledged by them, he would turn that knowledge to account by throwing upon Manuelo, and upon others, the appearances of guilt.

'She meant well,' reflected Mr. Herbert, summing up those confessions of the previous night—'but she placed me in a predicament. However—I promised!'

The first thing he heard, on arriving at the hotel, was the intelligence that Hugh Ormond-Weir would not be present at the interview with M. Renaud. With this intelligence Detective Toppin was awaiting Mr. Herbert at the hotel. Mr. Hugh Ormond-Weir had gone away from the Rue Marbœuf address on the previous evening—had quitted Paris, it was there believed.

CHAPTER XX.

'And Renaud is here already, sir. He hoped you would be punctual, he said. He saw me in the courtyard of the hotel, talking to Vowcher; and he stopped to exchange a few words. Knows Vowcher, too: though *that's* not extraordinary. Said he hadn't got much time to spare, and hoped you would be punctual. I hardly recognised him—I *tell* you, sir. Ah—you ought to have watched him come walking along that courtyard, round by the fountain, half an hour ago, a-swinging his cane gently, and a-smiling to himself as if he was a philanthropist, a-reckoning up his good actions! Blest if he hasn't got a florid complexion on this morning—and light 'air! And you'd think the 'air was growing, it's so put on. Wish I knew where he gets his wigs made.

'But, at the Rue Marbœuf—what did you learn exactly?'

'Gone away, sir,' replied Mr. Toppin gloomily—'went away last night, sudden, but nice and quiet. Ah, *I* knew how it would be. Slipped through my fingers nicely, didn't he? We can get him back, of course; but it'll be too late then for a good case, *I* dare say. By that time he'll have—*you* know, sir'—Mr. Toppin winked with a dread significance—'ah, what we can do when we've got influence to bring to bear! Not money so much, sir, as influence—influence, sir! There's plenty of people up and down the Rue Caïn that can be suspected of this murder, if we want 'em. But there'll be no means of bringing out this case, if the chivalrous Renaud means a hush-up!' Mr. Toppin's bass became spasmodic with suppressed emotion.

Mr. Herbert had nearly reminded his companion that the object which he himself held primarily in view was precisely the avoidance of any public scandal in connection with the name of Ormond-Weir. Surely, however, Detective Toppin did not believe——?

Detective Toppin would have preferred not to say, just yet, what he did believe. But had not this Mr. Ormond-Weir informed Mr. Herbert—as the latter had repeated to Mr. Toppin—that he had arrived in Paris on the morning of their own visit to the Rue Caïn—on the morning, therefore, after the committal of the crime? Now, Detective Toppin had learnt at the address in the Rue Marbœuf that

Mr. Hugh Ormond-Weir had been staying at those premises for at least a week.

'It's quite true, sir,' he added, 'that so far as the concierge, Benoît, could state, there were no later visitors to the deceased, on the evening in question, than the two lady visitors as we know of. But Benoît then paid his usual evening visit to the wine-shop at the corner. Who occupied the concierge's lodge during Benoît's absence? His wife, of course. But look here, sir: last night I took a little stroll, like, up to the Rue Caïn, round by the No. 13, to see what people might be saying. They're not saying much; it's nothing new up there; what they *are* saying, sir, is suicide. But look here, sir. Benoît's wife told me that she'd stepped round to see a neighbour, too, and that she'd left somebody else in charge of the lodge—oh, not for long! oh dear no, not for very long!—but quite long enough, *I* dare say! Ah! Eh? Eh, sir? Ah!'

'Well?'

'Yes; and *I* want to know whether, while that somebody else was in charge of the lodge, a later visitor than those two ladies didn't go up those dark stairs just merely to see the deceased Allèn, otherwise A. R. Garth! Eh? And perhaps that later visitor was the gentleman that went away last night from the Rue Marbœuf, and won't come back unless we fetch him. And perhaps the somebody else that had charge, for a short time, of the concierge's lodge, could swear, it might be, to our gentleman! P'raps our gentleman was disguised; p'raps he wasn't. But p'raps that somebody else has been questioned by the Impeachable Renaud! Eh? Ah!—Ah!'

They were conversing together in a quiet corner of the large reading-room. Anxious to attend at the appointed interview with M. Renaud, Mr. Herbert felt, nevertheless, that by neglecting any such hints as these, reasonable or unreasonable—any suggestions arising out of a personal investigation by his companion—he might be attending at that interview in the position of a defender incompletely armed.

'Monstrously improbable, this notion of yours, Toppin,' said he.

'I only wish it was, sir,' returned Toppin, plunged in still deeper gloom—'I only wish that we could bring the case home to the lady!'

'Good heavens, man! What are you saying!'

'No—I mean I only wish it was the lady that was guilty! —because, a case of guilt, you know, sir—that was understood between us. Ah, what a case—if the lady had been guilty!' Mr. Toppin shook his head, and sighed with an almost lachrymose mournfulness. 'And here's the chivalrous Renaud again hushing-up! Sure of it. Sure he'll hush-up. And *me?* Me, sir? What's to become of me? Me and my case? Here was a case that would have made T. Toppin.'

Whence came to Mr. Herbert that temptation, once more: from what source, ignoble or worthy? If this man were guilty, were they not both bound, as ordinary honest citizens, to aid in his detection and his punishment? And then——! Did she love her husband, still? Could that be so! Who should say that it could not be so?

The constancy of a woman who had once loved ardently —who should say that slights, affronts, harsh treatment, worse, her own later love, could put an end to a woman's constancy to that first ardour? There would be later loves, and they, too, might be ardent; and women there were who could think, and could boast that their own constancy to the first had been long ended. Who believed them? Not the later love—neither the second, nor the twenty-second! And who would be the best judge?

The first might have doubted; but—the others knew.

'You, see, sir,' continued T. Toppin, 'if M. Renaud is going to hush this case up, anyone else—for instance, me—who went against him, and tried for a conviction, would very soon find that the place had been made too hot for him to stay in. I've been cogitating upon that, sir, and I can see it now. For instance, me: blest if I'd be surprised if he went and managed to convict me, of something, myself! Ah, this is a bad case!

'Our fears, you know, at first, were that Renaud would *not* hush-up,' said Mr. Herbert impatiently. 'We have no right to question his good faith. Nor need *you* complain, Toppin. If we should succeed in evading anything like scandalous rumour, you shall be established in your inquiry office if you like to quit the Force.'

'Well, I'm with you, sir,' replied Mr. Toppin, with less gloom. 'But when I caught sight of Vowcher here, this morning, I couldn't help thinking of what the old Colonel

used to say to me—old Colonel Sampson, that is, of Wigwam City. "Toppin," he says——'

'Vowcher?' interrupted Mr. Herbert—'Vowcher? Not Aaron Vowcher?'

'Yes; of the great office, Burleigh Street: Aaron Vowcher, "Confidential Inquiries undertaken. Secrecy. Despatch." Know him, sir?'

'Never saw him, to my knowledge. Over on business?'

'Suppose so, sir. Asked him, and he said he'd just come over for a few days' gaiety and pleasure; and so it's evidently business.'

'He was speaking to Renaud?

'For a few minutes. *I* should say, from Vowcher's surprise when he went up to Renaud, that they'd already met this morning, *I* should. S'pose Vowcher got here by the early mail.'

'How did you meet with him?'

'We were coming into the courtyard, down there, at the same time.' Mr. Toppin paused. 'But if Renaud's going to keep names quiet,' he resumed cautiously—'oh, what devotion, sir, to class! Bless him, the dear man, what chivalry! There *is* a lot of chivalry about: it's awful! If it's a price, however, sir—are they rich—certain parties that shall be nameless?'

'Might there be a—figure?—have you heard?'

'There's a man of my own stamp, sir, at the Prefecture—a man I'd like to have with me in a good case—and *he* has been turning matters over in his mind, and *he* has thrown it out, quite in confidence, to me that, if you put two and two together——' Detective Toppin interjected an 'Ahem!' that rumbled to the farthest corner of the reading-room—'there *is* a benevolent institution which has no existence, for which donations might be thankfully received: received by the illustrious; received, but not acknowledged, under hand and seal, oh dear no: the said institution, of a benevolent character, to be alluded to, in preliminary remarks, as interesting orphanage, with model workshops and healthy recreation-grounds; orphanage with recreation-grounds being no less an institution, sir, than the private police of Simplice Renaud!'

'Oh—is *that* it, is that it!' commented Mr. Herbert, in an

undertone, as if not speaking for the benefit of any person but himself.

'Ah — r — I'd often wondered where the funds came from.'

'You've brought me a most welcome piece of information, Toppin, my boy!' exclaimed the representative of Gray, Longley, and Gray. 'I'll get upstairs, and donate the institution. And you shall be donated, too, Toppin!'

'Well, thank you, sir. Renaud's an artist; and I'll grudge him nothing. Though there *was* a time when I did hope that if I did ever meet him in a case—well, well!'—Mr. Toppin sighed—'To err is human, sir, ain't it!—But can they stand the prices, Mr. Herbert, sir—the parties that shall be nameless?'

'Oh, as to that——!' Mr. Herbert sprang to his feet. 'Renaud has attended rather earlier than the time he gave; but I must not keep him waiting.'

'Because,' continued Detective Toppin pensively—'Because, when I caught sight this morning of Aaron Vowcher, here, I couldn't help recollecting of what old Colonel Sampson said to me, one day. "Toppin," he says, "in everything that you undertake, in this life, Toppin," he says—"a liberal basis," he says, "a liberal basis: that's it!" "Think so, Colonel?" I says. "Sure of it, my son," he says. "Now," he says, "what I'd like to see you at the head of one of these days, is a Private Office of your own, an Inquiry Office, Toppin, and——"'

'I apprehend your meaning, T. T.,' interrupted Mr. Herbert gaily. 'I must be off, though!'

'"*And*," says the old Colonel, "*But*"—I mean, the old Colonel says—"if there's one thing that I wouldn't like to see, Friend Toppin, it's yourself and your abilities at the head of an Inquiry Office, a Private Office of your own, that wasn't established on a liberal basis. How's the basis," he says, "Toppin? That's the greatest question," he says—"basis: how's the basis?" I had a letter from the old Colonel this morning.'

'We'll start the Toppin Agency on a good basis for you,' answered Mr. Herbert, clapping his companion on the shoulder, and hurrying him through the long reading-room. 'Now—tell me: apart from the point of Renaud's willingness or unwillingness, price or no price, Institution or no Institution—what made you arrive so speedily to the con-

clusion that he was intending to hush-up this particular affair?'

The other hesitated.

'Come—out with it!' said his questioner—'but keep your voice down!'

'The party of the Rue Marbœuf has got away,' returned Mr. Toppin evasively. 'How has he got away? Renaud, sir; that's how. Do you think he's moved a step without being watched? Do you think he hasn't been watched inside the house, as well as out of it, as long as was desirable? Do you think he could have gone any further than the end of the street, if M. Renaud hadn't chose! Well, what I say is—Ineffable and Superfine lets him know—eh? Eh? Ah! —that's it—Influence *and* donations to the Orphanage—oh, ah!—thankfully accepted, but no receipt given: much too high and mighty to give receipts!—what! mistrust the Bayard of the Prefecture?—oh fie, fie for shame!—he lets our gentleman know that he's a highly interested party under the will——'

'Ah!'

'Yes; that's it, very likely—highly interested under the will that you're going to hear, presently, upstairs. Well, what's that? Motive, in a minute. S'pose the deceased took occasion to inform our gentleman that—he *was* that highly interested party.'

His own conjecture.

'Not at all probable, Toppin,' faltered Mr. Herbert.

'Well, sir, *you* know best about the relations of the parties. But, as for his getting away clear, s'pose he's handed over the donations already—or s'pose he's promised them, and made it right?'

'All this depends upon the will. Give me a call this evening. I'm sure you're wrong about the testamentary dispositions.'

'Then we'll suppose, sir, if you like, that it's the other that's the highly-interested party under the will.'

'What other!'

Detective Toppin gazed fixedly at the topmost panes of the lofty window, and through them, fixedly, at a glimpse of the blue sky.

'The——'

'Lady?'

'Just so, sir.'

Mr. Herbert drew his companion along with him to the foot of the main staircase, and there suddenly grasped his hand.

'On one last point,' said he, in a low tone, 'it refers to dangers from certain colleagues of Renaud—dangers to be feared from their desire to—expose and denounce him, for—for very properly—for, acting as a—as a gentleman—for showing true chivalry in——'

'Ah, that's it, *'cré nom!* Ha! ha! ha! Chivalrous! Ha! ha! ha!' Mr. Toppin's guffaw, in his rich young voice, rolled with a fine bass music. 'Excuse me, sir—I'm only a policeman, and a bit rough at times, but—ha! ha! the chival——'

'D——n it!' muttered Mr. Herbert, who had flushed, and was now rapidly paling, 'let us call the business by its name. Suppose we buy him: are we sure of the others?'

'There's only one other; and that the functionary that you saw: and what with Crispin, who wants his place, and the fortune-teller that I went to see last evening, in the street, there—the woman that *we* met, sir, as we were coming round the corner with Renaud—I thought it was funny, too, at the time, the way he was flustered, that functionary, when the woman dropped a curtsey to Renaud—and it wasn't much, for a curtsey either: but what with one, and what with the other—I tell you what it is, sir: it's Renaud, and it's nothing but Renaud! We can't touch him. None of us can touch him. If Renaud says "Yes," it's got to be "Yes," somehow; and if Renaud says "No," it's got to be "No." He's *the* man, sir, and there's none of us can touch him when he gets to work! And so simple, with it, and so quiet!—and in our business, Mr. Herbert, sir, that's what we want, and not the Artful. It's the Artful and the Oh-such-a-Knowing-One, sir, in *our* line, that gets took in by the habitual crims. Renaud? Ah!'

'Well, well—give me a call.'

'Renaud? That man, sir, is our Alfred and our Omega. It's no use. He *is!*'

'Well, well—come this evening.' Mr. Herbert paused; then resolutely added—'But—as to the guilt of the person in question—don't go fixing that in your mind, now!'

'Well, it don't matter, sir,' grumbled Toppin—'*I* couldn't convict him, though it might be my duty, and I'd like to.

I'm not going to bring Influence down upon *my* head! Not for T. T.! There's nothing proved; and *I* shall be quiet. But you can be certain of one thing, sir, at any rate—that Simplice has only let him get away because Simplice knows pretty nearly everything he wants to know. This evening, sir? All right, sir.'

The contents of the will: a plain phrase, Toppin, soliloquized Mr. Herbert, making his way again towards the suite of rooms which he had quitted on the previous night, late, the repository of a strange confidence, if all were told —'a plain phrase: words that have been used in common routine often enough, good heavens! by myself—words that I have often used without once thinking that they meant to others, possibly, what they may now mean to—some others, and—to myself!' Either absolute ruin, or a renewed lease of prosperity—a more brilliant, a more substantial prosperity, and a long lease of it—for the establishment of the Ormond-Weirs, who had no encumbrances; the immediate fortunes of the one woman now so dear, so dear to him; her happiness; her fate: how vast for the whole world they seemed, these issues which concerned but half a dozen persons in the world; one of the half-dozen, Evelyn—another, himself; but not one of the half-dozen (Renaud excepted?) likely to be remembered, likely to present the rest of the great world, or to force upon the world's unwilling acceptance, any useful memento for a few years of an existence that had been lived, any permanent memorandum of the worth of effort!

But if these issues, vital to his world, were now to appear dependent upon the tenour of plain routine words, upon the burden of an informal communication to be imparted laconically—how measureless, how overwhelming seemed to him —as the deciding influences upon lives, waiting—the nothings which together go to make up Accident, the trifles that shape a mood, the drifting gossamer that fixes an Occasion! What had been Garth's mood? Upon whom were to be visited the responsibilities? This was a message to them by the man now dead. To them? This was a message, but—to them? Amidst what memories had the man now dead composed this—it might be, no message for themselves? Had he not been guided rather by bright early memories than by the harsh awakening, rather by wishful evocations of dead hopes than by resentment at the undeserved?

What foolish credences had perhaps governed words that were to be read out from the last will and testament presently? Foolish credences, perhaps—idle hopes? Or had not the mood in which the words were written been shaped by some resuscitation of an anguish?—by trifles, nothings—the chance insult of the moment from some stranger reeking with self-content or arrogance, drunken with the blockhead's nectar—by the resemblance of some chance affront to some affront of bygone days, when, to quiet her conscience, Evelyn joined those who had maligned this man, or had derided him? There were some of us who, having been more or less mangled by the feminine hand, could realize long afterwards that those lacerations were caresses. But such a solace could never have been Garth's.

In what mood had Garth unknowingly disposed of lives? And the occasion—determined by what touch of an evanid web?

'Am I to learn now that, rich again and safe, she turns from me as in the past she turned from Garth himself, with impatience and relief?' Or would she turn from him with no impatience, no relief, but merely animated by the deadliness of the cordial feminine esteem? There was to be said about the despised worship of the 'dreaming idolizer,' this: That, although the lady might play-act right through; the play, eccentric comedy or broad farce; and although some bystanders might hold their hips and loffe, and waxen in their mirth, and neeze, and swear a merrier hour was never wasted there; whilst others grieved; the dreaming idolizer, of all oblivious but the dreamed idol, seldom, if ever, was selected as a fit object either for the cordial feminine esteem or for the bounteousnesses of toy acquaintance. He might take to grovelling in the dust, but he was never to be confounded, there, with the great family of the Sauria. He might supply a painful spectacle for his friends, and he might incur the Sun's displeasure, but he wasn't the pet lizard, basking. You might flout at him as an infernal nuisance, but you couldn't deny him his virility! (Oh, Mr. Herbert! oh, oh!) He didn't come out into the sunshine, bask and bask, and whisk about with variegated lizards; bright brown and sky-blue; gray lizards or gruesome; green-and-gold—some with more emerald, others with more gold—bask, bask, with whisking lizards, sweet-pretty glancing lizards—and fail to get the sun into his circulation! (Oh,

Mr. Herbert!) He idolized, and was despised: 'twas natural. But he was *Homo*, the Man! (Renegado, sir!)

What was to be the final aspect of his own share in the story, demanded Mr. Herbert, envying for an instant the share of A. R. Garth, deceased. Envious!

Envious of a souvenir! Envious of a dead body at the Morgue—of a dismembered frame—a trunk dissected—a heart peered into for a secret!

Envious of the woman's faint souvenir of a futile adoration?—and therein perhaps not in the wrong. What—if not this one—is that souvenir which often enough Time strengthens unexpectedly—that buried memory which, after slaying the forgotten figure, Time often enough revives? Fantastic outlines creep across our path, meridian once lived through. Before us, along the straight road bordered by swaying trees, are shapes that move. Other shapes are they than those we saw before meridian, shapes that have led us to the forms themselves—and have then vanished. Meridian passes. Fantastic outlines thrown by the boughs yet green, or dying, or dead, deepen across our path. Oh, phantoms of the dead forms—mercy! The twilight nears. The lost forms leave us with their shades.

If not the shadows of the forms we see no more—or *may not see*—what are our souvenirs!

* * * * * * *

Madame Bertaux, coming forward to excuse a slight delay, moved and spoke like a somnambulist. M. Renaud had arrived somewhat earlier than the hour named, she announced. He had awaited Mr. Herbert's arrival with impatience; and he was impatient to leave. At the moment of Mr. Herbert's arrival, she had been conversing with M. Renaud on the subject of the Rue Caïn crime. To that was due the slight delay. Would Mr. Herbert desire, prior to the interview at which they were to learn the purport of the will, to see—to speak with her—to consult——

'I think not,' said Mr. Herbert steadily.

She had told Madame Bertaux that if he should express a wish to see her prior to the interview——

'I should like to see her,' said Mr. Herbert.

M. Renaud was alone, and awaited them; but he had informed Madame Bertaux, who had received him, that the interview would be brief: the will consisted of a few plain, straightforward sentences. M. Renaud would have been

willing to apprise Madame Bertaux herself of the contents of this document, but it seemed that there was a question which he desired to address to Evelyn personally. He had made no allusion to the deception practised upon him by Madame Bertaux herself, yesterday, as to the name Conyers —or rather her persistence in the concealment of the name Ormond-Weir. He had stated to her, however, that Mr. Hugh Ormond-Weir would not be present at the interview.

'Ah! He is aware of that?'

Was this the confirmation of an hypothesis he had just heard?

Madame Bertaux regarded him with mistrust.

'And you—sir?' He explained. Had the fact been communicated, he asked, to—others? No. 'Do you believe that he may have escaped, sir?' she added, in evident terror.

'Escaped?'

'He cannot—he cannot have escaped?'

'But—escaped?—you are assuming that——'

'They could recapture him—yes!—but—in the meantime —and who would for a moment credit that *he*—no!—if he has escaped from M. Renaud they will say—they will try to prove—M. Renaud will try to bring the guilt home to some other! Rather than fail—he, who has never failed—M. Renaud would seek—no matter whom—some person, innocent—some person whom appearances—ah—is it not so?'

Upon a black scene, an interlucent phosphorescence: advancing trustfully through darkness, the bright figure of his beloved: at her feet, a suddenly rent chasm.

'*Yourselves?*' whispered Mr. Herbert.

She strove to answer. No sound issued from the parched throat, the convulsive lips.

'Yourselves?' Was this woman guilty? 'You are urging the impossible, *madame!*'

She did not answer.

'An assassin, then—our M. Renaud? An assassin of women—at best, an assassin of their good names, their lives—to save a wretched professional status, to preserve an eminence, to minister to a self-love!'

'Hush—oh, hush, sir!'

'It might become one's duty, other methods failing to be prompt enough,' he went on, with apparent calm—'other methods being effectual enough, of course, in the long-run,

but not prompt enough at the moment—it might become one's duty, I can conceive, to—the word is from his own language, Madame Bertaux—to forestall the danger; what shall I say—" suppress " the assassin.'

Mr. Herbert was extremely pale; and he, perhaps, trembled slightly.

Madame Bertaux broke out, with a sob:

'Ah, you would bring yourself to that for her! But, my own child—who will save my son?'

'Heavens! Madame Bertaux'—was the answer; cruel, it must be admitted—'who could be better qualified? Your son himself—or his associates!'

'I have deserved this for my ill-judged confidences,' sobbed Madame Bertaux; 'but my son—shall I not, of two innocent persons, save the one who is my own child?'

'The mother spoke there. But, of the two innocent persons, if one is to be sacrificed, I prefer, madame, that it shall be your son.' He laughed. The laugh sounded strangely from him. 'Yes,' he resumed, in a low tone, but with a deliberate significance, 'of the two innocent persons there is one to whom I am devoted body and soul. No shame must darken her white brow. No impure breath must utter her sweet name. No doubting eyes must ever——'

He stopped abruptly; overcome by the monstrous absurdities of his own vehemence. Her photographs were world-wide.

The notes of a piano—a chord or two struck sharply, impatiently—reached them from the adjoining room.

'Did he question you?' demanded Mr. Herbert.

'Question me!' Apparently she made a strong effort to collect her ideas, her impressions. 'Question me? I think not.'

'The statement you had made to him, as to the visit which you made—both of you—your visit to the Rue de Caen—that false statement you related to me last evening, Madame Bertaux—did you speak to him again about that: did you tell him——'

'Yes,' said she, lowering her gaze—'I have told him that that statement was not true. I have told him what took place, exactly. I told him of my own accord.' She stopped again, with an effort collecting her thoughts—'I am sure I told him of my own accord.'

The chords which had been struck at random, or im-

patiently, were now followed by the first strains of a melody. They heard the notes of a baritone voice. The singer was accompanying himself, softly; but both the method and the melody were dramatic.

'Shall we not proceed at once?'—muttered Mr. Herbert, with a sort of feverish intensity.

They found Evelyn awaiting them—not, however, alone. Miss Maud had just rejoined her sister, it appeared; and she was speaking breathlessly, with wide-open eyes. The legal adviser had scarcely bowed before Miss Maud broke out with:

'I'm so glad it wasn't you.'

'So am I,' said Mr. Herbert, with a ghastly but resolute endeavour—'So am I, Miss Farrar, if you are glad.'

'Maud means—the singer,' explained the grave voice, sweet and low.

And sweet the smile was, with the words. Oh, could Fate deal in these injustices? Farewell?

Miss Maud was disliking the *vibrato* of the baritone singer, that was all. But who could it be, then—who was it?—the visitor in the next room—the baritone who was singing an English ballad in that curiously mixed style, English and French?

'It is business, dear—and we must not waste his time,' answered her sister, deadly pale.

'Business—business, Eve? Oh, can't *I* understand it, too?'

'My dear Maud!'

'Why not?'

'It's full of long legal words, Miss Farrar,' interposed Mr. Herbert, fiercely eager to despatch this brief interview with Simplice Renaud. 'I don't understand half the words myself; and you'd put me out, if you were present. Yes—really! Now, I am sure'—said he, as pale as Evelyn herself—'you would not wish to put me to shame?'

The young lady answered that she would; and then she blushed a little, and laughed a little: and checked herself as she was about to embrace her sister. At the same moment, the words of the ballad, recommenced more loudly, reached them with distinctness—

'A blush, O rosier than the rose,—
O, white the brow as whitest marble pile,—
Sweet, low, the voice unnerving flows,
And sweet, and strange, the smile!

'O, will the blush-rose muse alone,—
The whitest marble warms beneath the sun!
O, vainly has the voice its tone?—
And may not smiles be won?'

'Well—for a business interview'—commented Miss Maud, with sparkling eyes—'Well!'

'Execrable taste!'—murmured Mr. Herbert—'Execrable!'

He turned towards Madame Bertaux. The singer was resuming—

'Ah,—one there shall be to rejoice,
To see the rose-blush tinge the brow serene!
But one shall dream the smile, the voice,—
And love the Might-have-been!'

'The Might-have-been!' The echo of a melancholy and a rapture, twice from the singer the phrase fell upon their ears.

'The Might-have-been?' asked wondering Miss Maud, of her eldest sister. 'Eve—tell me!'

The answer was an agitated whisper.

'A love-song ending in grief, my dear—but no grief that can ever come to *you!*' The sisters parted. 'Andréa——'

This is to be the most ordinary matter in the world,' began Mr. Herbert briskly. Miss Maud made a prompt exit.

'Were the last of those words yours—to me,' breathed Evelyn to him—'the last words of the song?'

'They shall be my words to you, Evelyn,' said he. Their glances met. 'It *must* be so. I cannot truthfully say it shall be ever otherwise.'

'You must not say that: you must not say that.'

'It *must* be so, Evelyn.'

'But your life—oh no!'

'Were these coincidences nothing? They were made for us—they were made for us, Evelyn!'

Madame Bertaux, preceding them, paused at the closed door.

'But the future, also, has its coincidences—for *you*,' said she; and the faint smile recalled in nowise the superb subject of the photographer; it was Miss Maud who seemed to be now smiling at him—Miss Maud, with gentle sympathy, and with a wisdom beyond her years.

'I have no future, Evelyn—henceforth!'

'Oh!'

'I have no future.'

'A reproach?'

'No reproach. I am satisfied.'

'That means—I know'—she still lingered—'I know that that means——'

'May I tell you once more? We are to take leave of one another: well—does this please you—does this gratify you?—apart from you, Evelyn, for me the future is a word that has no meaning but misery. Good-bye. It is egotistical, and it must be wearisome—this reiteration that you take our lives.' The pianist had repeated the *finale*, with a modulation, critically. 'Add to the number, mine. But I, at least, can say—farewell.'

'Then——'

With its rapturous echo of the sad might-have-been, the closing passage from the ballad penetrated to them once more with passion. . . .

'These coincidences!' cried Mr. Herbert, with a sudden violence—'the coincidences of our story, Evelyn——'

'Hush!' she interrupted nervously—'hush!'

'The coincidences of these stories—all such stories as our own—I say what are they but——'

'Hush!—Farewell.'

'What are they, these coincidences, but the bitter mockery of a Demon——'

'*Monsieur—on vous entend!*'

'Farewell!—Listen!—Oh, not another word!' The appeal issued from lips as white as her white brow.

'The bitterest of the mockeries that the Demon who——'

Madame Bertaux threw open the door and passed into the adjoining apartment.

A beaming, philanthropic, genial, ruddy Simplice-Jean-Louis Renaud, much pressed for time, jumped up from the piano. A hurried, hearty, unceremonious M. Renaud included three nullities in one salute, and with an air which conveyed '*Tant pis!*' looked at his watch. He might have been the late arrival at the railway terminus, looking at his watch, and thinking of his unregistered luggage. Nullities, these three! He turned his watch towards the light, he turned down the corners of his mouth, and his forehead he wrinkled up. He wore dark-tinted double eyeglasses.

Scarcely had they seated themselves, and scarcely had the

representative of Gray, Longley, and Gray, ended his curt preliminary observations, when, *in medias res*, M. Renaud was reciting to them almost the last words of the Garth inquiry. But a single wish, he had, clearly—M. Renaud: to relieve these excellent persons from their suspense. He did not know them; they were nothing to him; they were nullities, in fact—especially—perhaps rather too markedly—the dazzling Eve; but—suspense!—with such a good heart, he must hasten to relieve them from their suspense.

This, the terrible M. Renaud! *L'homme à redouter*—this! Did not Mr. Herbert sink for one instant in the estimation of the dazzling Eve? And Andréa? No, decidedly she had too highly rated Andréa's judgment and experience, Andréa's knowledge of the world.

The zeal of this M. Renaud was, under the circumstances, flattering. Curious, however, these foreign obliviousnesses of your social importance. Bad style, perhaps—this M. Renaud; but the zeal was flattering.

Her lips had been white, just now, like marble. They became again the crimson flowers, as they encouraged the chivalrous Simplice with a smile. The eyes were stars of morning.

Faux bonhomme! fausse bonhomie! The verdict flashed through Mr. Herbert's mind, as he watched Simplice-Jean-Louis Renaud—watched him as if they two were duellists. What lurked behind that urbane mask? Wickedness? What was it that the outward show dissembled? We had seen these dissemblers—these, and others—had we not? And some of us had envied their successes with the people we would wish to have esteemed.

The course which, premised M. Renaud, M. Renaud had unhesitatingly adopted to secure the continued presence of these ladies in Paris—a prolongation of their stay until the incriminating appearances against them could be dispelled——

'Incriminating?'

That fact was undeniable, replied M. Renaud. He removed his tinted double-eyeglass as he responded to the stars of morning. He toyed with the double-eyeglass; he waited for the rejoinder from the stars of morning; there was no rejoinder.

'We take them for granted, those appearances,' Mr. Herbert interposed—'absurd though they were.'

The course pursued had been dictated by considerations for these ladies' interests. A departure at the moment to which he was referring would have ruinously compromised the celebrated and distinguished lady whose identity was covered by the name inscribed upon the hotel register. Madame Conyers had enabled him, a plain officer of justice, to protect her, as (it was his pride to say) he ever sought to protect that sex, so weak, defenceless, and calumniated, from the blunders of the vulgar, from the machinations of the vile. He regarded Mr. Herbert, he regarded Madame Bertaux, and he lowered his discreet eyelids—diffidently.

A good, worthy, effusive, gentlemanly officer of justice; with a mellifluous enunciation; no accent in his English; a nice taste in ballad-singing. Let us encourage him. A smile encouraged M. Renaud.

'You have a copy of the will?' asked Mr. Herbert.

'Everything.'

It was Madame Bertaux who broke the brief silence which ensued. The others betrayed astonishment, anxiety —but Madame Bertaux betrayed acute terror.

'The death of poor M. Garth,' she ventured rapidly—'the circumstances which have occasioned his unfortunate suicide——?'

'Murder.'

A martinet, though, one might imagine—this gentlemanly officer of justice; his inferiors, perhaps, trembled before him; and yet at *her* he could not trust himself to look! How all these terrible orderers of other men were to be twisted round one's little finger—when one was a Beautiful Mrs. Ormond-Weir! And it was quite right and proper that it should be so. It made the world a pleasant place for us, the Beautiful Mrs. Ormond-Weirs. But, oh, how alike they were, all men! And especially all these terrible orderers of other men! Oh dear—oh dear! It was so useless for them to dress themselves up in uniforms, with stars, and orders, and chains, and braid; and, oh, it was so useless for them to pretend to be locked up in their gravities! Provided they were honest men, how easily you could trifle with them, and twirl them round your little fingers: how easily—provided they were candid and sincere, and honest!

'I think we ought to know the purport of the will without delay,' said Mr. Herbert.

M. Renaud's eyes met the half-veiled stars of morning:

met and fathomed them and questioned them swiftly: held them and questioned them. . . . Well? . . . Was she to answer him? . . . And why? . . . What could she tell him? . . . Andréa had better answer; Andréa, whom she consulted, and who acted for the best. . . . Or Mr. Herbert. . . . She would answer that they left all this quite absolutely——'

'Very well,' concurred M. Renaud.

She was going to make that answer, certainly; but she certainly had not uttered it. They talked of suicide just now—suicide, murder—topics too horrible and dreadful. Why did they talk about them just now? This man was questioning her again. . . . She would call Andréa. . . . Why did they talk of suicide? Had she ever wished that someone should commit suicide? No, she had never wished that—never! . . . Why did they talk to her of murder? . . . In odd taste, really, these interruptions, in this tone, by Mr. Herbert. For these interpositions, however, she felt obliged to him: more than obliged—relieved. There was nothing to compress her throat, nothing to encircle her neck tensely; and yet, at the throat, a band had seemed to tighten; one moment more, and she must have rushed to the window. Why? For air? The window was partly open.

Mr. Herbert had repeated some phrase peremptorily. Andréa, too, had spoken. But that other—was he close to her, or far away? . . . 'Andréa!' Her own voice sounded hollow and strange. 'Andréa!' How odd to be listening to an unfamiliar voice, and to know it was one's own! 'Andréa!' And that strange, hollow voice was hers!

'I did not call you, Andréa. I was listening.'

What! Her hands clenched! Mr. Herbert passed before her. 'Yes—take your notes by me, Mr. Herbert—at this table.' In strong health? Able to support whatever news—whatever bad news—there might be for her to hear? Of course she was in strong health! Of course she could support whatever news—whatever bad news—there might be for her to hear! . . .

Readjusting his double eyeglass, dark-tinted, M. Renaud read from a folded paper in his hand. . . .

'That copy of the will I leave with you.'

M. Renaud had read those brief contents aloud? What were they? No; she had not understood. It did not

matter. The contents of the will? It did not matter. Yes; she would listen.

'Then,' continued Mr. Herbert, with the same laboured distinctness, 'our friend had made the disposition of his property, in the simplest and clearest terms, as follows: One-third of all that of which he might be possessed, or to which he might be entitled at the time of his death, to Maud Effingham Farrar; one-third to myself; and the remainder—the remaining third—to be held in trust for a religious purpose, briefly indicated, but determinable by you, Mrs. Ormond-Weir: failing your intervention, the remaining one-third to be devoted to the endowment of a mission-room or church, in Paris, on such a scale as the proportions of the bequest may be found to admit.'

She proffered no comment, expressed neither satisfaction, displeasure, nor surprise. She was merely, and manifestly, indifferent.

'Failing your intervention,' resumed Mr. Herbert, 'this religious organization is to further the tenets of the Independent Kensington sect which has owed so much to your patronage. Failing your intervention, the control of the mission-church in Paris is to rest with the minister himself in Kensington. If you are willing that it should be so, the endowment will be made in your name, Mrs. Ormond-Weir.'

'Oh, but—I am intending to withdraw from them,' she murmured; 'I am intending to go over to the New Gnostics.'

It was Madame Bertaux who broke the silence which ensued. She asked for the date of the will.

'A recent date,' replied Mr. Herbert—'a few days prior to the decease.'

'And may I question, sir, if—if the document—may I question whether it appears to have been drawn up by a person in full possession of his faculties?'

'No challenge upon that ground could be based upon the will itself,' answered Mr. Herbert briefly. 'The deceased has complied with the requirements of both the French and the English law. He executed the will in duplicate. M. Renaud vouches for the accuracy of the copies? Quite so. Very well. Here is the English version, with the signature attested by two witnesses. Here is the French version, with no witnesses to the signature: a marginal note states

that the handwriting is easily to be identified; and, according to the law of France, provided that the handwriting all through be that of the person executing the will, no witnesses are needed for the signature. The deceased has evidently known this. The will has been drawn with perfect clearness.'

Again ensued an embarrassed pause. Then said Andréa Bertaux:

'But can it be permitted, sir, than an insane person should deprive others of their rights? With my experience of the world, I could not blunder. He was unquestionably insane, sir.'

'Who knows!' returned Mr. Herbert coldly. 'Perhaps.' There were two fertile causes of derangement of the mind—religious mania, and that other; they were both tabulated in the half-yearly reports of lunatic asylums. 'But that is no concern of ours. Who is to attack the will?' The contingent reversioner, possibly—Mr. Hugh Ormond-Weir. 'Nobody.'

He glanced at his companion. Regardless of the others, he still instinctively clasped her hand. Evelyn made no sign. The future? Her disappearance from society? Honour, love, obedience, troops of friends—from the Fashionable Beauty's point of view? None of these considerations could be present to her mind just now. A radiant Circe, lost in dream: the dream of mandragora—some drowsy syrup of the East.

'M. Renaud has doubtless been informed'—hazarded Andréa Bertaux restlessly—'if M. Reuaud could enlighten those who——'

The Bayard of the Prefecture turned from the bituminous oil-painting which he had been studying through those double eyeglasses the hue of bitumen.

'There are excessives in sincerity, madame,' said he, and his hushed, level accents pierced them slowly. 'The deceased—I knew of him—I knew of him. Insane? The sincerities we cannot sympathize with we call by hard names, do we not? And let them be profound enough, we call them—madness. And let them be sincerities that are futile—in madness perhaps they end.' He stopped for a moment, and then resumed, addressing himself to Mr. Herbert: 'The names of the two witnesses—you have

possibly not remarked them?—with one of them you have a slight acquaintance. He is an agent of my own; he was professedly a convert; we encountered him in the Rue de Caen; I spoke to you of him: Achille. The other was a professed convert, too. He was the nephew of the old bed-ridden Madame Michon, who was the deceased's neighbour. Madame Michon, miserly though she was, possessed large means; and this was known. Had she hoarded, her fate was sealed. She set out from her lodging once in three months to receive her dividends; and her dividends she deposited in safe keeping, without the loss of half an hour. She might have ended by hoarding money in the Rue Caïn. The nephew would have robbed her. Achille suspected him of membership in a well-organized gang of chloroformists who were declared to be unseizable. The deceased, your compatriot, the eccentric Englishman of the Rue Caïn, was chloroformed by this man, Bouvier, the nephew, aided by one other. Your compatriot distributed considerable sums of money in relief. That marked him out. He was a zealot. That rendered him accessible. Bouvier, as an assiduous disciple, had not infrequently paid evening visits to the deceased. So Achille reported to me.'

'Can you bear this, Evelyn?' whispered Mr. Herbert.

'This?'

She regarded him apathetically.

'It is the story of the death,' said he, with an instant's hesitation—'the death of our own friend, Allan.'

The resentment of an unwelcome souvenir, a chafing impatience, clouded the white brow, knitted the black, straight eyebrows, illumined the soul-full eyes. 'You speak to me of him too often. You always speak to me of what I do not wish to hear.'

'Does M. Renaud purpose that we shall understand'—the speaker was Madame Bertaux: her singular accent at once aroused attention; the lines of her countenance, gray rather than pallid, seemed to deepen into furrows—'that the murderers of M. Garth are known—and are arrested?'

'They are known,' replied M. Renaud. 'Arrested? Not all of them.'

'All?'

'Here was their combination.' M. Renaud prepared to take leave. 'The last visitors to the deceased are two ladies. No witnesses can be produced who, after the

arrival of those ladies, have seen the deceased in life. The deceased would have been chloroformed and robbed by Bouvier long before, but Bouvier was not sure of Achille. On the date in question, Bouvier, present in the adjoining apartment tenanted by the aged woman, Michon, knew of this visit, overheard partly the commencement of that agitated interview. You spoke in English.

There was no response.

'You spoke in English. Two English women, pronounced my Bouvier. The opportunity. Of course he at once quitted the premises. Of course he returned to make a later call upon his aged aunt: a call timed for the moment when Benoît, the concierge, had departed on his nightly visit to the wine-shop: when Madame Benoît was on her usual visit to a neighbour: when there was no one in the housekeeper's lodge. Bouvier was accompanied by two females—men disguised. The hour was late; the fanatic, serving his cause, was unsuspecting. Three men chloroformed the deceased; he succumbed whilst under the influence of the narcotic; and they hanged him, hastily, in order to present the appearances of a suicide. A dispute between the three men, and a disturbance in the house, interfered with their search. They carried away a small strong-box which they supposed to contain the valuables belonging to the deceased. It contained no valuables. It contained a few treasured letters.'

'How do you learn this, monsieur?' muttered Andréa Bertaux.

'Bouvier was not for murder. The fatal termination was due to one of his confederates. Achille gives me Bouvier; and Bouvier confesses. The identity of the English ladies who had paid the earlier visit, once established by the murderers, and—hush-money. Hush-money exacted by the assassins themselves! Such was their combination. Their demands refused, they could manufacture incriminating evidence. What if these ladies were suspected elsewhere? What if their motive could be proved!'

'Then,' demanded Madame Bertaux, with a visible effort, 'the confederates——'

'You will now accompany me, if you please, Madame Bertaux.'

'I?'

'An error, monsieur!' exclaimed Mr. Herbert, springing to his feet.

'Andréa?'

'Oh, a mere preliminary of procedure,' M. Renaud immediately replied—'an identification.'

'Andréa, what does it mean?'

Mr. Herbert hurriedly undertook to explain the hazard—the circumstance—the accident.

'If Andréa has not been true to me, whom can I trust—who possibly can be true? Oh, the world, the world! The world? Yes!'

The mental picture could no longer be pushed away from her, on one side, out of sight. There was a jeering and malicious world, a world that joyed when idols fell. . . . And the name—was hers to be the name! . . . She turned to M. Renaud with a supplication: despair: timidity. The jealous helplessness of one spectator raged above all at the timidity.

'There are dangers which you are in fear of,' said M. Renaud at once, quietly.

'Evidently there must be dangers,' interposed Mr. Herbert scornfully—'evidently!'

'You believe that there are dangers which I can save you from,' resumed M. Renaud.

Was it to this man that she spoke in those low, thrilling, contralto tones he knew so well; the accents which he never heard without a mingled pain and rapture; the voice which it had seemed to him, extravagantly, for an instant, never should be heard but by himself—to this man, the stranger!

'If you can serve us——' broke in Mr. George Herbert impetuously.

'A recompense?' The majestic figure of the group was certainly the figure of Simplice Renaud. 'For me, monsieur,' he added, with undisguised haughtiness, 'there are no recompenses; there are but slanders.'

'But if you should serve me—I may thank you?'

Her voice trembled slightly; and, before this man, she lowered her gaze. Her eyes fell before this man, a stranger.

'You escort Madame Bertaux, monsieur?'

It might have been their sovereign who was signifying to them his high pleasure. The sovereign bowed low, notwithstanding. Mr. Herbert noticed once more the white glisten-

ing scar along the neck; and the scar set him thinking of a knife that never spares—the blade of the guillotine.

CHAPTER XXI.

WITHIN twenty-four hours from the departure of Andréa Ruaz, *née* Bertaux, upon the undertaking to which, as it had seemed, on reflection, to her wondering mistress, that faithful and experienced adviser had submitted with a singularly unquestioning complaisance, arrived for the two personages who were to part for ever, the moment of a deferred and a dramatic separation. Evelyn was free.

The non-return of Madame Bertaux had apparently necessitated a second but briefer visit by M. Renaud. Nothing then had been left untold. Madame Bertaux's assistance had been requisite for the absolute identification of a prisoner, her own son. The latter, when first arrested, had attempted to shield himself by accusing Madame Bertaux and another of the crime committed, a few days previously, at the house, No. 13, in the Rue de Caen. He had next accused his mother of instigating to the crime, and, in the last resort, had tendered himself as an informer, upon this and other cases, against the whole of his confederates. M. Renaud had needed no such aid. His evidence against them, in successive cases, was complete. A *communiqué* from the Prefecture would appear the next morning in the newspapers, he had stated to Mr. George Herbert, to the effect that the Cain Street gang of chloroformists had been broken up. The indictments, he had added, would be based upon crimes anterior to the assassination of the *sieur* Allen. The circumstances attending the death of the *sieur* Allen would add nothing to the weight of the indictments; on the contrary, would but complicate evidence which was already overwhelmingly conclusive. A paragraph had crept into the *Echotier* recording the disappearance of a species of peripatetic visionary, *d'exportation anglaise*, 'of whose existence, probably, most of our readers have been unaware,' and who, 'in despair of raising the Parisians to the moral and religious elevation of our good neighbours on the other side of the Channel (far distant may it be, that period when we ourselves shall be found combining English vices and English hypocrisy!)' had ended

his days by suicide. Commenting upon this item of intelligence, another journal had declared that the 'Englishman of the Rue Caïn (a figure not unknown to certain of our readers), whose patibulary mien should have sufficiently condemned him, one would have imagined,' was a swindler of remarkable astuteness. For the pretended purpose of establishing a religious street mission on the successful English model, he had caused subscriptions, to a considerable amount, to be collected from his resident compatriots. These funds he had 'unscrupulously dissipated in the grossest forms of low debauchery,' and he had put an end, eventually, to his own life whilst suffering from a fit of *delirium tremens*. These were the versions of the press. No one would controvert them.

'Madame Bertaux will not return to you,' had announced M. Renaud, in explaining the relationships of 'that unhappy wife and mother.' In spite of the denunciations by her son, there was no ground for supposing that she had incited to crime. She had spoken imprudently; she had exposed facts; she had been candid with her son; the facts were not of her creating, and already had her son earned the sentence of the guillotine. She was 'incapable of wishing for the death of the deceased; but it was not at all improbable that she had wished that he would die.' Manuelo Ruaz had been one of the two confederates who, disguised as women, had acted with Bouvier in the assassination of the deceased. The theory constructed by M. Renaud, on the occasion of his visit to the premises at No. 13, Rue de Caen, had been exactly borne out by the statement volunteered by Bouvier. The chloroform had not been taken internally, because there were no signs of foaming at the mouth. Chloroform vapour could be readily administered to patients by means of a common cloth or napkin folded into the shape of a funnel, which was held closely over the patient's mouth and nostrils during inspiration. This method of administering the drug facilitated the admixture of a sufficient supply of atmospheric air; but for the operation to be safe the patient should be placed in a recumbent posture. Nor should the patient have taken food for three or four hours previously. The information briefly communicated to Mr. Herbert by M. Renaud was to the effect that the deceased had suddenly been pinioned whilst sitting at table. 'As one of your own physicians has described the

general operation of the anæsthetic,' said M. Renaud, relapsing into the level utterance of perfunctory exposition—'first of all, the brain, as the organ of consciousness, is benumbed; simultaneously, voluntary motion is impaired: reflex mobility, however, perhaps momentarily increasing in the voluntary muscles, and persisting in the muscles of organic life. The voluntary muscles then undergo complete relaxation, and the only remaining signs of life are those which are given by the lungs and the heart. The chief cause of death in chloroform inhalations is by syncope, and the patient becomes most exposed to the dangers of syncope when he is chloroformed in a sitting posture. The post-mortem examination has demonstrated, monsieur, that syncope was the cause of death in the case before us.' To the daughters of her benefactress, Madame Bertaux sent the message, through M. Renaud, that she never could return to take her place with them. They would soon hear from her, and she should beg for news of them from time to time. Her son was to perish by the guillotine. The days that were still left to her in this life would be lived through in seclusion, away from the world. Her intention was to retire into a convent. The villainies perpetrated by her son, a Protestant, had determined her to return into the Catholic religion.

Was the friend of the dead man to allow the stigma of self-murder to rest unjustly upon a memory? But Evelyn was free. How should he reconcile it to his conscience to say nothing of this foul and cowardly assassination, passed off as a suicide? Mr. George Herbert administered a soporific to his conscience. Evelyn was free. The dead man's foremost wish would have been self-sacrifice for the woman whom he had loved so long with purity and ardour. Silence would serve her best. If he could counsel me, said Mr. Herbert—'if he could give me counsel, or a command, it would be, silence.' Their duty was to shield her, to defend her name—*their* duty?—his duty was to shield her, to defend her name, to rescue her from common parlance. And Evelyn was free.

Mr. Herbert had been somewhat put to shame by Toppin's refusal, in the course of a final conversation, to accept the prized private inquiry office which was to reward him for his discretion.

'Can't, sir,' Toppin had decisively reiterated—'no,

sir, *'cré nom*, I can't! As to the whole case, sir, I'll say nothing; because, what's the good? Renaud means a hush-up, don't he? Why? Ah—r—it's this here chivalry with pretty women that does the mischief. Ah, sir! And why, sir? I know! Because there's always something a-lurking. Chivalry? Don't believe it, sir. Never existed in no age, sir. Always had its little game on, sir; always had its price, and was a-bidding for it always. Its weather-eye was always open, sir, chivalry's was. No, you don't! Why, anybody can be chivalrous with a pretty woman! There ain't no value in *that!* Chivalry? Ah—r—*I* know! And it's ruined my prospex.'

'Come, Toppin, my boy, you'll change your mind,' urged Mr. Herbert. 'We'll set you up.'

'Couldn't, sir. It'd be a price for being silent. I'll hold my row, sir—you can count upon that—but it'll only be because I'm not a-going to lose the prospex that are left. Renaud's too strong for *me* to say a word in this. What a fool he'd make me look! No, sir. I've been handicapped in this here case, *I* have. But T. T. can stay the course. T. T.'s a good 'un for a waiting race. The next affair with poisoning that I get with the Illustrious and Ineffable, sir, I'll manage that we start from scratch: no handicapping: and then they'll see.'

'Well, Toppin, you shall hear from me.'

'Heard from the old Colonel, sir, yesterday. Wants me to go to Wigwam City, he says, and "make my fortune." Make my fortune! I 'ate the phrase, I do. There's no man that I like and I respect much more than I respect and I like that old Colonel; but—well—there—I won't say anything. Only, what this letter reminds me of, sir, was that one day that old Colonel says to me, "Toppin," he says, "come out to Wigwam City, and you'll make your fortune.' "Make my fortune, Colonel?" I says. "I don't want to." "Don't want to make your fortune, Toppin?" he says—and you could have floored him with a teaspoonful of whisky in a pint of water. "No, Colonel," I says; "it's vulgar." "Vulgar," he says. "Toppin—did you say vulgar?" "Yes," I says, "Colonel it's vulgar; it's got to be vulgar nowadays!" "And you don't want to make your fortune, Toppin?" he says. "No," I says; "Colonel, it's the name of T. T. in connection with a love affair, and poisoning, and aristocracy, that I want to make." "Then," he says,

"Toppin, Wigwam City is your spot." "Ah, Colonel," I says, "there's no place like home, Colonel," I says. "You don't mean that little one-horse mud island of yours," he says, "Toppin—do you?" "Yes," I says, "Colonel, that *is* the place I mean;" and I *was* just on the point of making an addition, like—a tit for tat, you know, sir—but I didn't, I didn't: for I liked that old Colonel. "And," I says, "Colonel," I says again—"there's not any place like home." "No," he says, "Toppin—there ain't no place like it—is there?" "No," I says, "Colonel, that there ain't." "And that's why you don't live there, I guess," he says. "Ah'—r——," I says, "Colonel—ah'—r——" I says——'

Mr. Toppin's vain effort to recall his repartee excited the liveliest commiseration of his listener. Mr. Herbert came to his relief with assurances repeated and renewed.

'Well, Mr. Herbert, sir, if you'll do *that* for me,' Detective Toppin wound up by saying, 'I won't say no.'

The Hugh Ormond-Weir affair was commonplace, had premised M. Renaud, and in his narration of the facts he had been brief, official, passionless, but quite explicit. Mr. Hugh Ormond-Weir had returned to the Rue de Caen on the previous evening. The object of his errand had been the corroboration of certain evidence collected upon his behalf by the private inquiry officer whom he had retained to watch the movements of his wife, and who, as a matter of fact, had been engaged in watching Mrs. Ormond-Weir during the past few weeks. That private inquiry officer was the well-known Aaron Vowcher, of London. Aaron Vowcher had been staying in the hotel itself—under an assumed name, of course. The name he had registered in the hotel books was that of Mowbrey. It was for the collection of evidence in support of a proposed divorce suit that Vowcher had been specially instructed. Vowcher and Ormond-Weir had gone together last night to the Rue de Caen. The former would testify to the fact that sums of money were disbursed; and he could also identify at least one of the Rue de Caen men whom they had afterwards accidentally encountered at some distance from that locality, and who had followed them, presumably, on their departure from the house, No. 13. Vowcher had frequently been in professional relations with M. Renaud. The latter had ascertained the circumstances under which Aaron Vowcher—their business concluded, so far as the Paris inquiries were concerned—had on

the previous evening parted from Mr. Hugh Ormond-Weir, who was a man of dissolute habits. The latter evidence would prove the hour up to which Mr. Ormond-Weir was last seen alive. His body had been discovered by one of the early street-sweepers shortly after dawn. It would seem that he had been suddenly attacked whilst traversing a bye-street. He had been stabbed and robbed. It could be shown that he had had in his possession a considerable sum of money, and that he had won a considerable sum at the gaming-table. The notes proceeding from this source could be identified. Yes, it was unavoidable, had concluded M. Renaud; the street murder and robbery would be mentioned in the public press. But a common street murder and robbery! A well-dressed man waylaid at night as he is returning home! Who paid attention to such trivial matters?

Again and again Mr. Herbert had deferred the moment for broaching the benevolent institution in his talk with M. Renaud. The latter's manner, it seemed to him, forbade and excluded the introduction of any such topic as reward.

'You have shown so much consideration for us,' Mr. Herbert had at length forced himself to urge. 'You are protecting us so generously from that which we have dreaded—sensational publicity, rumours, scandal—that we owe you'—what could he say?—'we owe you some return—I hardly like to say recompense, M. Renaud.'

The personage addressed responded with but a faint gesture of deprecation.

'You wish us to remain your debtors, then?' continued Mr. Herbert.

'No,' said the Bayard of the Prefecture—'my friends.'

They were speaking in the presence of pale Meropë; the star dimmed by a mortal; the widowed Pleiad who was shrinking from them—shrinking from them both: ay, because they knew: and what a mortal!—and they knew.

'But we may never meet again,' urged Mr. Herbert.

'*On se retrouve*,' answered M. Renaud placidly.

'Still, if we never meet again——'

'With your permission—pray—I need no thanks—no, I pray—none. Let me add, however, if you will?—thanks—that my rule, my maxim, my unswerving principle, in all I do is'—there was no show of sincerity as he pronounced

these words, nor any trace of cynicism; it was a lesson he repeated, his thoughts perhaps far off—'that we must always protect women, at all costs; for no woman can do wrong.'

'Do we say farewell, then?' returned Mr. Herbert hastily.

'My maxim is that women only seem to err—that those who err are men.'

'We say farewell, then?' said Mr. George Herbert, in still greater haste.

'My rule of conduct is to shield from all evil hazard all members, every member, of that weak, defenceless sex, so wronged—calumniated—innocent.'

'Noble words, monsieur,' replied Mr. Herbert, with a change of manner—'ah, those are noble words!'

A rustle of the feminine robe. She advanced. Her eyes were downcast. She advanced to acknowledge this man's chivalry—but why, fair Meropë! this pride and this disdain? —The true stars are not thus in their effulgence, bright and soft!—the stars are mild and gentle, the true stars. Why? Why—this man with tinted eyeglasses was treating her as if she were a quite ordinary woman: he was confounding her with all others of her sex. With one haughty glance, and with the cold contact of her finger-tips, the widowed but not sorrowing Meropë thanked this man who wore tinted eyeglasses. There was one other movement. It was perhaps unperceived. She would have repaid this strange man and his chivalry with the gift of a turquoise ring! M. Renaud, withdrawing, bowed ceremoniously.

'*On se retrouve*,' acquiesced Meropë, with a great effort.

'*Quelquefois*,' said M. Renaud.

He was gone.

Mr. Herbert was to stay in Paris for some time longer than he had intended. He was to 'arrange all business matters,' and to arrange all private matters, and to arrange all matters pertaining to Jagannâtha—Society. And no one was to be made acquainted with their whereabouts. Evelyn and her sister should remain upon the Continent for several months, and they should both live quietly, alone. . . . 'To escape from the world!—oh, to escape!' . . . Yes—and to return!—oh, to return! . . .

They had not noticed that their carriage to the Gare de l'Est was followed by an open cab containing a short, thick-set, elderly or middle-aged mechanic, attired in grotesquely ill-suited best Sunday clothes. Who should have noticed

him, indeed—that poor, bent, muttering slave, pallid and humble, with fixed eyes, following his hallucination? Hands thrust him back. Arms barred the way. Rude voices rallied him. Rough and harsh laughter.—*Fou!*—Shrill exclamations, or a shriller peal—or simpers.—*Fou!*—This way, that way, the same everywhere.—*Fou!*—Barriers, barriers. 'It was the same, and I can see her! Not the bad fairy, nor the good. The Queen of Night! It was the same—we go now to my village!'——*Fou!*——' She waits, she waits—for when she came to our dark lodge, where the fierce rats attack us in the dirt and damp, she said, "These twenty odd years have not passed: there is a miser in your village, Champenois: *allons!*——"' Shouts, and a scream. Barriers. Billows of white: a white cloud: mist: the air again clear: emptiness. Gone!—gone!—Emptiness: the air again clear: gone: ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! . . . Ha! ha! ha! ha!—*Eh bien, quoi?*—Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! . . . Gone. Gone.

'Yes, it's gone away, the train has, my old fellow—and to-morrow it will go away again. Why, how the booby stares! To-morrow? Yes, to-morrow; and, after to-morrow, the day after; and the next day, and the next. Why, how the booby laughs!—Ha! ha! ha!—And you can come here every day, and see? Yes, my old fellow—*mais il est fou!*—come every day, *mon vieux*, and see. The same train? Just the same train, at the same hour, every day. *C'est ça!* To-morrow, then. Oh, they'll say nothing! You shall look. *C'est ça!*'

Happy half-witted man! he has to-morrow, ever to-morrow and his happiness. His joy shall never go.

'And now we leave you to your horrid law,' had exclaimed Miss Maud quite gaily to Mr. Herbert as they parted. She had not yet been told of the 'sad accident,' by which her brother-in-law had lost his life. There was some talk of business letters to be sent on, and some talk of books, the latter for Miss Maud. But Miss Maud urged him gaily to forget the books, to forget the letters, to forget her sister and herself. 'But still, it *is* a shame,' had added the young lady, a little nervously perhaps, just at the last moment—'it *is* a shame to leave you to your horrid law.'

And then came the shouts and the abrupt scream; and then emptiness. Gone.

'What right have I to say I love her?' soliloquized Mr.

George Herbert moodily, but not thinking of Miss Maud. 'What follies can I point to—what mad extravagances? How have I proved it? Why should she believe? I have committed no follies, no extravagances—none of the madnesses with which men sometimes worship, deaf to the loud laugh, blind to the complacent, too-complacent, smiles, incredulous of the warning bystander—usually a woman.' He suddenly resolved to endow the New Gnostic Church; to that purpose should be devoted the whole of his share in the estate of Garth, deceased. 'She will never remarry: that, of course, for a time. When she remarries'——it should be brilliantly. She had listened to her heart once. She would now listen to ambition. And she would be right. A crown, a sceptre was her due! On one side, Mr. Herbert, sir, stand aside. Were they to meet again, ever? Soon, or in future years? Amid new scenes, or in scenes familiar to them both, and crowded with memories? Had Coincidence but sported with them? Would all end? Or had Coincidence fresh work to do? How would she meet with him? Ungenerously? With real or assumed indifference, or forgetfulness? Ungenerously? 'I, at least,' concluded Mr. Herbert—'I, at least, have committed none of the wild, tortured extravagances, none of the follies, the wild passionate follies, which drive men away into some hiding-place, where Doubt, they hope—doubts of the Goddess—may never come to them—where Doubt may never hint the Goddess's smile, complacent, the too-complacent smile—where Doubt may never, as they hope, echo the distant loud laugh, the jeer.'

How would she meet with him, if they should meet again? He might be told by women that it was weak and foolish to believe in any of them; he preferred to think that it would be stubbornly ungenerous to doubt THIS ONE.

'And there'—answering himself, reflected Mr. Herbert—'there is the whole question. If only she would keep her wings—if only she could wear them!—the angel that a Man creates!'

It was in the first week of September that they met again—September in the same year. Arriving from London, touching at Paris, and then proceeding upon an interminable further journey of just one hour and thirty minutes, Mr. Herbert was surprised to find that this 'interminable

journey' in the autumn took him to a land of summer flowers. The tiny village, with its peaceful street, its thatched roofs, and its moss-grown walls — around, and stretching far away, the fields of crimson, scarlet, yellow, and pure white—was a nest that no one knew of, in a wilderness of roses.

The business letters had been few, but there were other letters.

Two sisters, clad in black, walked in a garden with high walls. Beneath their feet, above their heads, on either hand, haunted by brilliant butterflies and birds, clustered and trespassed, clambered, fell, drooped, or entwined the lavish jewels which a blue sky smiles on in a cottage garden after tears. Of these sisters, one, grave since the morning, carried a book—a book which, since the morning, since the few words of a confidence that morning, she had opened, opened, opened—not to read. It was the gift of someone who had quoted to her, once upon a time, some appositenesses caught up from someone who was dead. It was the gift of someone who had quoted to her that 'Evil was wrought By want of thought, As well as want of heart.' And they had never warned her not to trust in Life, the Life of story-books that ended happily. When she had first read the verses in this volume, they had not seemed to her to be of the same world, of the world she knew, of this world that she lived in.

> 'Ye weep for those who weep, she said:
> Ah, fools!—'

Oh, it was hard! His messages—why, when he wrote to Eve, had he sent messages?—

> 'Ah, fools!—I bid you pass them by.
> Go, weep for those whose hearts have bled.'

Eve seemed so happy when she gave those messages. And yesterday, when Eve had said so gently, 'You are not at all kind or just to Mr. Herbert; for you know——' Yesterday, and again this morning, when Eve—— Oh, it was hard—it was too hard! No one had ever told her that there were these unhappinesses for girls, when you were neither plain nor mean-looking, neither ugly nor deformed. Could men have these unhappinesses, too? No; she felt sure, quite positive, they could not. Hugh, for instance; and Mr. Garth—poor Mr. Garth, who had died of an 'overdose of

chloroform for *delirium tremens !*' Then, Mr. Herbert. Well, it was natural that Eve should like Mr. Herbert; and she was glad, glad that Eve liked him; but men were too busy, and too thoughtless, and too selfish, ever to suffer, ever to really suffer. Yes, Eve had said so often that men were scheming, insincere, or selfish, that it was impossible, when she thought of Mr. Herbert, and she *had* thought of him, to help remembering that he was neither selfish, nor scheming, nor insincere. There *must* be others like him; very likely there were others who were much better. But, oh! it wasn't the others who were much better that she—— Still, she had her duty to perform now. Eve should never know. Eve should never suspect the least, least; because it would only distress her. But how terrible to reflect that there were these unhappinesses for the women who were helpless, for the women who, plain or mean-looking, ugly or deformed, possessed no riches, the riches which—as Eve had exclaimed one day contemptuously at Niederbronn, a month ago, after perusing a weekly journal, 'written for ladies by ladies,' and crammed with Fashionable Intelligence—purchased blindness!

Along the garden paths, in the soft evening shadow of September, now walked Miss Maud, alone. Her book had opened of itself at lines which she had hitherto read incredulously, or—puzzled, with an admixture, perhaps, of a tiny sentiment of self-satisfaction and superiority:

> 'Ye weep for those who weep, she said;
> Ah, fools! I bid you pass them by.
> Go, weep for those whose hearts have bled
> What time their eyes were dry.
> Whom sadder can I say? she said.'

'But what is this haunting terror? this malady, Evelyn? this malady you dread?'

Her white hand, pressed against a black robe—pressed with an appeal to him and with a prayer to heaven—shone, like her white face, almost luminously, through the soft gloom of the September dusk.

'You will laugh at me.'

'Evelyn . . .!'

'No, no, no, no. No! You will not smile?'

'Tell me—tell me!'

'A long word—oh, a formidable word.'

'He shall be slain, the formidable word! Tell me——

She paused, and it was she who smiled: she, fearing happiness: the beautiful woman he loved; the adorable infant: pale Meropë: raising a mortal to the stars, the Pleiad: one of the divinities that make men deathless. She touched his hand—an angel comforting him.

'Hypertrophy—of the heart,' said she, with a smile, and then with a sigh.

'Hypertrophy of the heart!' whispered Mr. Herbert, reeling, and clutching at the latticework of the cottage-porch in which they stood together. The perfumes of the dew-laden and entangled straggling flowers filled all the air. The air was motionless. Above them, in the waning pale blue-green of the unclouded evening sky, the first star, Hesperus, hailed Night once more—once more the night. A dog barked in a remote farm. A bird that rustled in the leaves of branches dark against the sky—still clear and lucent, but fading—twittered its lamentation for the full spring-song, extinguished, lost. 'Hypertrophy of the heart!' echoed Mr. Herbert. It was an accent of such anguish that the strange smile vanished, and a sigh was checked. '"The malady of those,"' he murmured, remembering, '"who have laboured too much, suffered too much, loved too deeply."'

With a mad phrase, a phrase of impious defiance, he folded her in his arms.

'You will not let me die?' said the faint voice.

He pressed his lips upon her lips as if to silence fear for ever. As if to strain into his heart the malady from hers, he clasped her passionately, but almost with a sob, upon his breast. As if it might be he should save her and should die—as if it might be he should die for her and save her, or, not saving her, die with her, uselessly—uselessly, but with her—he folded his arms about her reverently, but with a sob—as though it might be he could strain into his own breast the malady from her heart.

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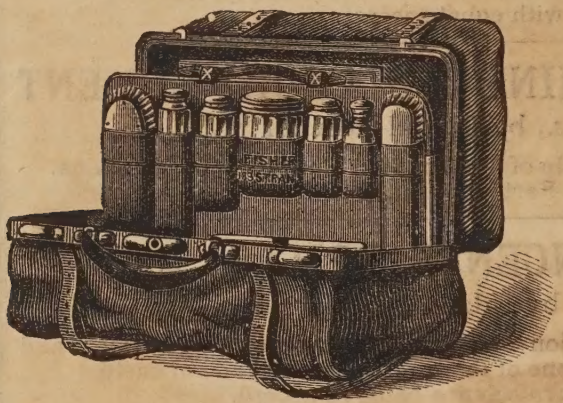

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